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A Letter to Parents and Carers on My Retirement

Dear Parents and Carers,

As I write this letter on my final day as Headteacher of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail, it is difficult to find the words to express what this school, and this community, have meant to me over the past 38 years.

When I arrived at YGG Tonyrefail as a newly qualified teacher, I could never have imagined that I would be fortunate enough to spend my entire career here. From my first day in the classroom, through my years as Deputy Headteacher and then Headteacher, this school has been my second home. I was lucky enough to secure a job at YGG Tonyrefail all those years ago, and I was so happy here that I never wanted to leave.

One of the things I have treasured most has been the warm sense of community and belonging that makes our school so special. YGG Tonyrefail has always been much more than a school; it has been a family. Over the years, I have had the privilege of teaching many of you as children and then, years later, welcoming your own children through our doors. That is a rare and wonderful experience, and one that I will always cherish.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all parents and carers for your support over the years. Education is a partnership, and everything we have achieved together has been possible because of the strong relationships between home and school. Your support has meant so much to me, to our staff and, most importantly, to our children.

As I say goodbye, I know there are many things I will miss. I will miss the children, whose energy, enthusiasm and smiles have brightened every day. I will miss the dedicated and talented staff who work tirelessly for our pupils and who make YGG Tonyrefail such a special place. I will miss my daily chats with parents and carers at the school gate each morning, hearing your news, sharing a laugh and feeling that strong sense of connection that is at the heart of our school community. However, if I am being completely honest, there is one thing I definitely won't miss—and that is standing outside in the pouring rain at the gate!

No Headteacher succeeds alone, and I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Miss Hughes and Mrs Murphy. I have been incredibly fortunate to work with such talented, dedicated and caring colleagues. Their contribution to the life of YGG Tonyrefail has been immense, and I will miss working alongside them every day.

I have been privileged to follow three outstanding Headteachers: Miss Betsi Griffiths, who gave me my first opportunity at the school; Mrs Preece (Mrs Thomas); and Mr Rees. Each of them instilled in me the importance of placing family, community and care at the heart of everything we do. They taught me that schools are built upon relationships and that the small acts of kindness and thoughtfulness

often make the biggest difference. The school's philosophy reflects the words of Dewi Sant: "Gwnewch y pethau bychain" – "Do the little things." Those words have guided me throughout my career and remain as relevant today as ever.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Governing Body and, in particular, our Chair of Governors, for their guidance and unwavering support over the years. Their commitment to the school and its values has been invaluable, and I have been fortunate to work alongside such dedicated people.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank parents and families for the incredibly generous retirement gifts and flowers I have received. I was deeply touched by the beautifully commissioned vase, featuring illustrations of both the old and new school buildings. It is a truly unique and meaningful gift that captures so much of the history and spirit of YGG Tonyrefail, and it will always have pride of place in my home. I am equally grateful for the generous gift voucher. Your kindness, thoughtfulness and generosity have overwhelmed me, and I will treasure these gifts as lasting reminders of the wonderful community that has meant so much to me throughout my career.

As I leave, I do so with a heart full of gratitude and pride. I am proud of what we have achieved together, proud of the generations of children who have passed through our school, and proud to have spent my entire career in Welsh-medium education. Seeing so many children develop into confident, fluent Welsh speakers and ambassadors for our language and culture has been a privilege and one of the greatest rewards of my 38 years at YGG Tonyrefail.

Although I will no longer be part of Teulu Ton on a daily basis, Teulu Ton will always be part of me. The memories, friendships and experiences I have gained over the past 38 years will stay with me forever.

Finally, I would like to wish Mr Lewis every success and happiness as he begins his journey as Headteacher of YGG Tonyrefail. I know that he will be welcomed warmly by the children, staff, parents and wider community, and I am confident that under his leadership the school will continue to go from strength to strength while holding firmly to the values and family ethos that make Teulu Ton so special.

Diolch o galon,

N. Downes