

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

We would like to express our gratitude and best wishes to the following members of staff who are leaving us this year.

Teaching staff

Four long-serving teaching staff leave following many years of distinguished service to the School.

Sarah Gomm (Deputy Head Pastoral, Designated Safeguarding Lead, and Teacher of Chemistry) retires after 32 years, Rob Johnson (Teacher of Physics) leaves after 23 years, Caroline Lomas (Teacher of Classics and former Head of Classics) leaves after 20 years, Peter Davis (Director of Music) leaves after 19 years.

Alexis Dachtler (Teacher of Geography, EDI Coordinator and former Day Housemistress of Round House), Alison Petit (Teacher of Lower 1 and English and former Housemistress of Ancaster), and Emma Roe (Housemistress of Stevens and Teacher of Maths) leave after 12 years.

Chris West-Sadler (Teacher of French and Head of Voluntary Action) leaves after 11 years; Steve Dachtler (Housemaster of Clipsham and Teacher of Drama) and Andrew Reid (Teacher of Physics) leave after 10 years.

Catherine Walker (Teacher of Biology) and Phillipa Sykes (Head of German) leave after seven years; Dims Ashton (IBMP Coordinator) leaves after 5 years; Sarah Donlevy (Head of Business), Arthur Mayhew (Senior Deputy Head) and Zoe Wardell (Teacher of Music) leave after four years; Laura Taylor (Teacher of Art) leaves after three years; Tom West (Head Strength &

Conditioning) leaves after one and a half years; Amanda Beacham (Teacher of Computer Science) and Todd Tunley (Teacher of Religion and Philosophy) leave after one year.

Visiting music teachers leaving are: Manda Williams, Elizabeth Murphy, Andrew Ferguson, Helen Williams, Richard Baker, Richard Coxon, Connie Tanner, Rebecca Leyton-Smith, Harry Jacques, Gabriella Jones, Ryan Drucker.

Sports Fellows leaving are: Annabelle Northcott, Henry Joule, and Lizza Ryan. Music Gap Assistant Archie Foster.

Language Assistants leaving are: Carla Gonzalez Del Pino, Clara Mosteiro Outeda, Jacob Chico Cruz, Justine Cauvas, Remi Pozin, Julie Lecomte, Jessica Kutscher.



Support staff

We say farewell to the following support staff who have left during the academic 2023-2024 year.

Eight long-serving support staff leave following many years of distinguished service to the School: Sue Beckwith (Deanscroft Domestic Assistant) leaves after 35 years; Sue Bent (Wharflands Matron) leaves after 33 years; Lesley Bradley (Payroll Manager), Debbie Gough (Science Technician) leaves after 22 years; Kirsty Hallam (Chef), Linda Thompson (Chef) leave after 24 years; Claire Betts (Assistant HR Business Partner), Jayne Handley (Domestic Assistant), Paul Clarke (Chef) leave after 21 years.

Sam Barratt (Sports Facilities Duty Manager), Bill Freitas (Director of Digital Services), Jayne Handley (Domestic Assistant), Fabian Margasinski (Accounts Assistant), Sarah Panter (Billing Officer), Nicholas Priestnall (Development Consultant), Hayley Rose (Catering Assistant), Chrissie Ryder (Health and Safety Officer), Victoria Schofield (Concerts and Music Projects Coordinator), Gosia Sobanska (Domestic Team Leader), Anna Steiger (Director of Admissions), Mary Tait (PA to Senior Deputy Head), Claudia Wood (Catering Assistant).



THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

We say a special thank you and farewell to some long-serving teaching staff who leave following many years of distinguished service to the School.

SARAH GOMM

Sarah joined Oakham School in 1992 as a Teacher of Chemistry and, since arriving, has always been a Tutor in a Girls' Middle School Boarding House. She became Director of Activities in 2001 before moving on to become the Head of Middle School in 2004. In 2008 Sarah became the Second Deputy and quickly became Deputy Head Pastoral and Co-Curricular. As safeguarding legislation evolved, Sarah became the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), later expanding this role to a team. Below are just a few of the many different tributes to Sarah that colleagues past and present have provided.

"Sarah is an authentic and inspirational teacher. Her teaching ability shines through when she is in the Chemistry lab. Her incredibly calm, clear and gentle approach, tinged with gentle humour, give the children the confidence to believe in themselves and go on to achieve far more than they thought themselves capable of."

"Everyone aspires to do well for Mrs Gomm. A dedicated tutor who makes time to help everyone develop, she balances leadership with approachability and every child knows they can ask for help. Sarah ensures every child has the best journey they can through school, and in doing so, the children feel safe and supported, allowing them to focus on their learning."

"Sarah has driven the development of PSHE and RSE teaching, which has evolved significantly. Sarah has been instrumental in developing our Connected Curriculum, in which Pastoral Learning takes its place alongside the academic and co-curricular pillars and teaches pupils the importance of



knowing themselves, the skill of making good, well-informed decisions and how to take care of themselves and others."

"Sarah steered Oakham School through Covid. She worked tirelessly to ensure everyone had access to their lessons, but essentially, the whole community had access to information to keep us fit and well, physically and mentally."

"Sarah is always there for the children. No matter how busy she is and how much she has on her own plate, she will, without fail, make time for others. Parents and pupils have come to rely on her gentle but no-nonsense approach, and all staff know that if they need a sounding board or someone to confide in, Sarah will be there for them."

Thank you for everything, Sarah, and take care.

Written by the Oakham School Community

PETER DAVIS

Peter is an extraordinarily talented musician both as a performer but also as an academic and composer. There are very few Directors of Music with quite such a pedigree. He has composed an astonishing number of music pieces – arrangements of music for each different set of Form 3 Music Scholars; new pieces for choirs and chamber groups; many pieces of music arranged/composed for drama productions over the years; and a number of pieces which are now published.

He has dedicated his working life to the children he teaches, going above and beyond to support/accompany/look after them. There is no doubting the energy and expectation that pupils feel in a PD rehearsal. He wants them to achieve and play at the best level they can, and for some this is extremely high indeed. Peter has led, cajoled, and conducted some wonderful concerts – his wide musical knowledge means he is planning his repertoire years in advance to showcase each individual's ability.

Over the years it has been a privilege to work with Peter to help some of our most talented musicians navigate their school life. From those who want to practise four hours a day, to those who just want to play football, Peter has worked with pupils, parents and HMs to try and balance and support each individual, whilst also of course wanting to help them achieve their musical potential.

He has led numerous tours to places such as Germany, Ireland, Italy, France and Latvia, with a wide variety of pupils and staff. Always chatting and supporting the children involved, wanting them to enjoy the trip whilst also performing at the highest level, sometimes in extreme heat, in some fabulous settings.



Peter has led his department with great passion and aplomb. During Covid Peter worked tirelessly behind the scenes to support his colleagues and continued to bring us Congo, Chapel services, Christmas carol services and concerts online due to his brilliant musicianship and also his superb IT skills.

Peter is a very kind, thoughtful and generous man. Striving to achieve what he sees is in the best interests of the children in our care, and those who live and work here. He has a quick-witted sense of humour and is always keen to support those around him. He, I hope, can reflect on the musicianship he has brought to the School; the enjoyment he has brought to those of us who have listened to so many concerts, and in the coming years look forward to continuing to use his energy and passion to bring music and to all who he comes into contact with. Thank you, Peter.

Written by Sarah Gomm

SUE BENT

Sue joined the School in 1991 and for many years was a key member of the Housekeeping team. She then decided the library was next on her hit list and as a Library Assistant she kept many a pupil on their toes until 2009. Since 2009, Sue has been our beloved Matron in Wharflands.

When I spoke to the boys and their parents at the recent House picnic, I described Sue as the ultimate Wharflander. In life we are sometimes touched by special people. People who think of others before themselves, people who demonstrate kindness and care in a way that inspires us all. For us in Wharflands that person, is of course Sue. In House, we talk about leadership, and we talk about role models. I am not sure if the boys could have a better role model than Mrs Bent. A tireless worker, who never puts herself first, her contribution to the House and the School over the past 30 years is intangible and of course, priceless.

In 15 years, there have been 385 Wharflanders and their families that have been fortunate enough to have had Sue as their Matron. She has cared for seven Resident Tutors and in her words, she has survived three Housemasters!

When I asked Sue about what the highlights of her time in Wharflands have been, she in her gentle way just replied that every day is a highlight. When prospective parents and pupils visit Wharflands on a tour, Sue will have greeted you with the following. "I am the mum of the House during the day, I am here for anything you need." That is what she said to me when I started as a resident and it is true today.

Sue has been the backbone of the Wharflands over the past 15 years. Without her, the House would not function and her support of the boys, their families and the staff is unquestionable.



As the Headmaster often reminds us, our primary role is to ensure the children under our care are safe and happy. It is without doubt that the care, compassion, and selflessness Sue has shown the pupils and this School over the past 30 years have not only ensured that they are safe and happy, but they have been able to grow and mature as individuals who are able to tackle the challenges that lie ahead after they leave Oakham. Sometimes great partnerships must come to an end and now it is time for Sue to enjoy a slower pace of life and time with her family. We wish her all the best in retirement, and we can only thank her for all she has done for us all in her time at Oakham. Thank you, Sue.

Written by Tim Dixon-Dale

CLAIRE BETTS (NÉE WALLIS) ('89)

Claire Wallis, as she was then, joined Oakham initially in 1987 to do A-levels in English, French and German. In those days the Girl's Day House was squashed into Talbots, which is at the back of School House. Certainly, the accommodation has changed significantly since then! Claire then went to Oxford to read French and German and then off into the City for 10 years where she worked in HR at NatWest and at Macfarlane's law firm. However, in 2003, she was attracted back by the then Headmaster Joe Spence to Oakham School to set up and establish the HR department. This was not an easy task as the different worlds of education and HR took a little bit of meshing together, and Claire was instrumental in driving this forward. Schools are very complicated beasts with the diverse range of roles that are required to make them function. There are teachers, obviously, but also chefs, plumbers, accountants, ground staff, electricians, domestic teams, and so the list goes on. Each profession requires contracts, job descriptions, particular working arrangements, and there is a need too to link all this accurately to the payroll system. Claire managed this single-handedly for a significant number of years. She has worked with, and for, three Heads and five Bursars, all of whom she has supported with a calm and outwardly unflappable air. Not only this but she manages, without fault, the Single Central Register. This may mean nothing to you, but from the School's position and from a safeguarding perspective, this is a crucial document that is needed to ensure that we are compliant. On a number of inspections, the lead inspector has noted specifically how impressed he was with it.

Claire has also been there to support colleagues when they were struggling or needing advice, helping those both



new to the School and those who have been here a long time. She has ensured that the very, very complicated world of HR has a human face that is both thoughtful and approachable.

And then there is Claire the party girl – well Claire the party organiser! For over twenty years Claire has had the unenviable job of trying to arrange the staff Christmas party. This is an almost impossible task with such a range of staff, but she calmly works hard behind the scenes to try and land an event that is enjoyed by as many as possible.

Claire is leaving Oakham to start the next stage of her career, working a little closer to home, helping coordinate community grants for Market Harborough District Council. She goes with our best wishes and very grateful thanks for all that she has done for the School. We are sorry to see her leave the HR team, but delighted that she will remain part of the OO community.

Written by Sarah Gomm