

14 July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

As we enter the final week of the 2025-2026 school year, I would like to take this opportunity to write to you to acknowledge the retirements of Helen Jones and Joanne Clayton – our Executive Headteacher and Head of Primary.

Although both have previously written to parents and carers to outline their own reasons for retiring, it would be remiss of me not to also get in touch to mark what will be both a celebratory but also sad occasion for our school community when they do bring their careers to a close on Thursday.

Joanne Clayton joined the school as Primary Achievement & Standards Leader in June 2015 before quickly rising through the leadership team, first as a Director of Teaching & Learning and then on to her current role as Head of Primary.

Joanne has brought to bear her experience from a career as an outstanding teaching practitioner and applied this to her leadership of primary provision at Appleton Academy. Joanne has ensured that children and young people have the best start to their time in school, while also building lasting relationships with parents, carers and staff too. Joanne is a calm and positive influence and has been a very visible leader. She can regularly be found on the school playground, offering a warm and welcoming greeting to children as they arrive and speaking with parents to tackle problems and ensure that everyone has the support they need.

Joanne has also met the task of successfully integrating primary school provision into an all-through environment with great enthusiasm and expertise. From school performances and nativity plays, to events, visits and residentials, children continue to enjoy a richly varied and rewarding time in primary school at Appleton Academy, even though they are part of a larger school setting. This is indicative of Joanne's thoughtful leadership.

Helen Jones has been instrumental in the academic interests of the children and young people of Wyke for almost two decades and will leave an indelible mark on our community. Having been the Headteacher at the former High Fernley Primary School, Helen joined forces with the Head of the then Wyke Manor School to deliver the promise of an all-through school (the first in Bradford) in the heart of the community of Wyke. That school would become Appleton Academy and, having initially shared leadership, Helen eventually took on both the role of Head of School and then later Executive Headteacher in recent years.

Helen's vision and educational expertise were key in the original design and architecture of the wonderful, state of the art building we have today. A challenge made all the more difficult when a third of the agreed budget for the design and build of the school was withdrawn before construction had even commenced! However, not to be deterred, Helen's integral leadership role in the project delivered the incredible learning environment and facilities that the children and community of Wyke had long deserved.



The legacy of our wonderful school site alone will stand as testament to Helen's leadership at Appleton long after she has left to enjoy her retirement. However, those who remember the former Wyke Manor School will know that the school was also subject to special measures for many years. Having been leading the much more successful High Fernley Primary School at that time, Helen found herself inheriting an all-through school that needed to shed this reputation.

Through her hands-on dynamic leadership, determination, hard work and development of the team around her, Helen re-set the expectations and standards for staff and students, eventually leading to our Good Ofsted inspection rating in 2021. These expectations and standards are now embedded in school, ensuring that more of our children and young people go on to achieve their aspirations. Indeed, one of Helen's proudest achievements is that so many of our students who have spent their school lives at Appleton Academy are now amongst the first generations of their families to attend university.

Both Joanne and Helen have left a lasting mark on the lives of children, parents and staff alike. I am sure you will join me in wishing them both, a long, healthy and happy retirement. We will miss them greatly but know that they have made an enormous contribution to Appleton Academy and the community of Wyke.

Yours faithfully

Rachel Cruise

Ms R Cruise
Executive Headteacher