

19 February 2012 Last updated at 17:18

## **Tributes paid to 'amazing' teacher Peter Rippington**

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**By Sitala Peek**  
BBC News

**By a flag in the Alvechurch School car park, pupils and parents have been laying tributes to a well-loved maths and sports teacher who died when a coach crashed in France.**

Peter Rippington, who was 59, was among 49 people on the coach bringing pupils home from a skiing trip when it crashed near Chalons-en-Champagne, in northern France.

Ten passengers have been taken to hospital, one of whom is described as critically ill, and more suffered minor injuries.

Shocked pupils past and present gathered on Sunday to remember the teacher who made such a difference to their lives.

One group of pupils left a red apple with a note pinned to it, which read: "You will be truly missed. You were a one of a kind teacher and can never be replaced. You were funny, kind and always made everyone's day."

### **'Real character'**

Former pupil Kimberley Thornton, 23, from Redditch, came to lay flowers for her old form teacher.

She said: "He was my form tutor, he was absolutely amazing. He was just really a different kind of person, I could talk to him."

Other pupils remembered a "real character" who made them laugh.

Tom Van Der Plank, 13, who has now left the school but used to be in Mr Rippington's maths class, said: "I went on the school ski trip with him in year six.

"We had a talent show and he dressed up as a woman. He was a real character."

Tom's mother, Kate Van Der Plank, said: "All the parents loved him. He had been organising school trips for years.

"They were always very well organised and we felt safe letting our children go with him."

Michael Darby, 16, who was taught maths by Mr Rippington for four years, came to the school with his mother to lay flowers as a tribute.

He said: "He was a wonderful man, he was firm but fair."

Rebecca Wilks, 17, said: "He was just the most amazing teacher - everyone used to call him a legend - he was just a really loveable guy."

Members of the community expressed shock at what had happened.

Alvechurch councillor June Griffiths, from Worcestershire County Council, said: "The school has been going on these holidays and has been waving the children goodbye year after year and they've been coming back safely and that is what they thought would be happening this year.

"For it to have ended in a disaster like this, the local area is in absolute shock and cannot believe that it is Alvechurch middle school that is having to go through this."

Dr John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, said: "I was shocked to hear the news of the terrible coach crash in France.

"My thoughts and prayers are with those who have been bereaved, those who have been injured and their families, and all at Alvechurch School, as are the prayers of many people in the Diocese of Worcester."



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