



Friday 7th May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I have loved being the headteacher of Mill Rythe Junior School since January 2017. Every day, I have the privilege of learning, laughing and achieving as a member of the Mill Rythe Family and that is what has made my decision to leave for a new challenge at the end of this term such a hard one. When I think of our school, I will always reflect on the words that Erin Hartman shared in a speech she made as a year 3 child whilst she stood before a hall packed with new year 3 parents:

“This school is unique! Can you tell me of another Junior school that has its own ducks, chickens, goats and bee hives; where the children can become young farmers or young bee keepers? A school with its own swimming pool where the children get to take part in over 100 hours of swimming during their four years at school. A school where there are over 600 club opportunities each week? A school where the learning meets the needs of all of the children helping them to make excellent progress? A school where the adults care so much about the children that we might just be the happiest school in the world.”

MRJS is an incredibly special school and I would like to start by thanking you, our parents and carers, who have trusted me and my team with the education of your children. From the first day, you welcomed me to your Island, supported and challenged me as we worked to build a school that met the needs of our community and shared both special and difficult moments with me. It has been a pleasure to work in partnership with you.

I work with a remarkable staff team. I wish you could see the time, energy, care and effort that they put into enabling all of our children to flourish by developing their character, knowledge, understanding and skills through an inspirational curriculum so that they can embrace the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences that await them beyond MRJS. Every term, they go above and beyond what should be expected of them in terms of the amazing extra-curricular provision that is available to our children. In the last 12 months, they have had to respond to a constantly changing educational environment in the face of Covid-19. I couldn't be prouder of them or to have wished to work with better people. I will miss their ambition, commitment, laughter and desire to always do what is right for the children we work with.

Lisa Charlton is an exceptional Chair of Governors. For the last 17 years, her commitment to our school has been unwavering. I trust her completely and am able to talk to her about the challenging aspects of my job and life knowing that you will listen – but also challenge, and always offer me honest and sound advice. Thank you, Lisa. She leads a brilliant governing body who have been instrumental in the development of our school into the one that it is today. In no particular

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Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Erica Wintle BA (Hons) PGCE

Assistant Headteacher: Miss Rebecca Vousden BSc PGCE

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order, Liz, Nic, Hayley, Tim, Karen, Rosie, Jenny and Clair, thank you for your dedication, challenge, support and encouragement. I don't think many people understand just what an important role you have in the life of a school and the huge amount of time you give up each year to make sure that our children get what they need.

Throughout my time at MRJS, Hayley Warner has also led our PTA. The opportunities that she and other parents have provided for our children alongside the significant funds that have been raised have enabled us to transform different aspects of our school. As Ted leaves us this summer, Hayley will also hand over the PTA to new parents in September. She leaves behind a farm, a new hall floor, individual lockers, class libraries, iPads etc, but most importantly memories that our children will cherish for years to come. These include the opportunity to push myself, Mr Darby and Mrs Brydon off of the Spinnaker Tower! Thank you, Hayley and your team.

My enduring memory of MRJS will be the children that I have had the pleasure to work with. I love starting each day on the gate and being greeted by so many happy faces and excited voices. Their achievements both within and beyond the classroom are a constant source of joy – the attention to detail and quality of work produced every day in school, achieving and overcoming challenges at Calshot; setting new standards with their sporting performances; the quality of their artwork and love of drama, dance and singing and the joy they take in being in each other's company. They are polite, hardworking and inquisitive about the world they are growing up in and a credit to their parents and carers.

I am delighted that Miss Vousden has accepted the invitation to become our acting Headteacher from September. She has been central to the growth and development of our school and you couldn't ask for a better person to be responsible for your children's education. She will lead MRJS with integrity and kindness.

I am incredibly proud to have been the Headteacher of Mill Rythe Junior School and am going to miss being part of the MRJS family hugely at the end of this term. In the words of Winnie the Pooh, 'How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.'

Have a lovely weekend.

David Bessant
Headteacher