

**Headteacher's Address at  
Elizabeth College Junior School Prize Giving  
June 2014**

Directors, Principal, Sir Richard, ladies, gentlemen, staff past and present, girls and boys welcome to tonight's celebration of the many achievements of our children.

In this, my final speech as Headteacher of the Junior School I wanted to talk about three periods in not only my life, but that of the School. The past, the present and the future.

I wonder how many children have thought about what they would like to be when they grow up? Francois, I think, may write a book, whilst playing his piano in a Jazz Club – I would just ask Francois if he would send me a signed copy of his first book as a keep sake. Amelia, I think, may want to perform on the stage in the West End, maybe at the Royal Opera House or some such famous venue. Don't forget Amelia I would love a ticket, just as I have been promised by your older brother Barney a few years ago. I think that amongst the children in Years 3 to 6 some will want to be doctors, lawyers, nurses, IT specialists, sports stars, musicians and even teachers – it will all depend on their attachment to the many role models in their lives and their educational experiences.

When I was at Grammar School in Richmond – upon-Thames, the teaching was very traditional – well, it was a long time ago children and schools were very different to nowadays. I was taught mathematics by a very clever teacher called Mrs Pook. She was so clever and good at maths that she actually couldn't really teach most people in her maths set! So if you were good you were OK, but if you struggled she found it difficult to help you. I was one of the lucky ones because I understood all of her teaching so with my friend, Anita, we ended up teaching everyone else how to do the work. That was when we both decided that we would become teachers and off I went to Homerton College, Cambridge.

I began teaching in 1973 & have taught thousands of children, in schools in London – Grammar, Comprehensives and an IAPS Prep School. Each was different and each added to my experience in their respective sectors. I have now taught from very small children to those in the sixth form, so the breadth of my understanding has grown considerably and I hope that I have always ensured that each child has become excited to learn and that I have made some difference to their future lives.

Moving to Guernsey to join Richard and my younger son, Tim, was a life changing moment. A sabbatical – great I thought. Time to work with the builders and architects, as we finally were allowed to build our house, that is until I spied the advert in the Guernsey Press – Headteacher wanted for Beechwood! So I applied.

I am so grateful to be have been given this opportunity to lead Beechwood in 2000, bringing my experience here and, with the fantastic staff team and support of David Toze and the Board of Directors, work began to bring Beechwood back to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Most of you will not realize how much happened prior to that first day of that Michaelmas term, so here is a short synopsis. We had no André then so all of my family –my husband and 3 children helped – skips were filled, everything including the paint pots was scrubbed, notice boards were covered with bright paper and borders, carpets were cleaned, rooms were painted, resources replaced.

There were 124 children on that first day with 7 new staff plus one and a half of the original staff, a new curriculum, changes to the uniform – that did cause some unrest amongst the parents, the games programme was broadened and we began to use coaches to transport the children rather than their parents, activities were introduced for everyone and the children thrived. They enjoyed all that we offered. It was an exciting time, with everyone working hard, as 8 weeks later we had an inspection – a great experience with a fantastic report and so we believed the new Beechwood was alive and kicking, it had been reborn.

So much has happened in the past that impinges on the present, and some just need to be mentioned. My apologies to the staff if they feel that I have left out anything important. I have made some fantastic staff appointments throughout the years. Staff who work very conscientiously to give the children in their care the best opportunities that they can. Staff who worked exceptionally hard to prepare for the inspection team. Staff who are positive, caring, have a great sense of fun and who develop good relationships with the children. In my Senior Management team of Jim Walton, Liz Brooker, Jo Atkinson and Chris Veron for many years there is a great strength and sense of purpose. We have worked well together and taken the school forward. I have great respect for my staff team and am extremely fortunate to have their support and a fantastic team spirit within my school. I shall clearly miss them greatly, as they help to make this school what it is today. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all that they have done – I hope that they have all enjoyed working with me, as much as I have with all of them and I look forward to seeing them for a knit, natter and a glass or two in the coming months. You are simply the best!

A huge investment in the Junior School site has allowed every building from Pre-School to Beechwood to be remodeled and refurbished. We have had new buildings, new furniture and equipment, great play facilities, resources are regularly updated and staff given good Continual Professional Development through training courses. From a school that was not really financially viable in 2000, we have become one that is making a pleasing profit that has allowed this investment to take place. I thank the Board of Directors and the Bursars with whom I have worked for their support, without this it would have been much harder to create the Junior School of today. My Pre-School team are fantastic. We are fortunate in having Mrs Liu as our Leader and she has worked tirelessly with her team – now relocated in a fabulous unit on the ground floor of Acorn – to create a warm, happy atmosphere in which very little children can feel comfortable, secure and happy as they learn much about themselves and the world around them. With School support, our staff have gained invaluable qualifications that have enhanced their practice and thus the experiences that the children meet daily. Well done to you all for your dedication and hard work in Pre-School.

When I was appointed, we had hardly any teaching assistants, two I think at Acorn House. Now we have a very strong team of teaching assistants and our Gap Student who work with all of our children in school. They work well with everyone, know all of the children and have a good team ethic. The school would be a very different place without them and I thank them for all that they do each day.

Over time, the school grew, the curriculum developed and the school community began to be more involved with the life of the school. In 2006, Nick Argent appointed me to the post of Headteacher of ECJS- the Junior School was born. This was a very exciting time for me and a period of change and growth throughout the school. Staff changed, the curriculum was brought up to date, new facilities built and resources purchased.

A year later, In 2007, we announced that Beechwood would take girls. Girls had been introduced to Acorn in 2000 and I was delighted that the Board supported this change and such a great change this has proved to be. I strongly believe that girls and boys should be educated together when they are young. They need to learn to work, grow and play together, live together in a secure environment where neither is worried about speaking up in front of each other. This makes for good working relationships and great teamwork. Everyone working in the Junior School firmly believe that our children are thriving with all the opportunities that are open to them. Girls, you make a huge difference to life in the school. You work hard, play well and enjoy the team spirit that pervades the school. Touring to the UK and hosting children from visiting schools have helped you to broaden your horizons. The girls' success in the Ladies College and Blanchelande Entrance Assessments is a wonderful celebration of all that they have achieved through their time in the Junior School. I look forward to learning of their future successes.

Our boys have also been very successful in their Upper School Entrance Assessments, achieving much success over many years. Without fail, many of the Junior School boys gain top ten places and, this year is no exception, with 8 children being placed in the top 10. Congratulations to all of our leaving Year 6. You have good foundations on which to build your future learning, so aim high, play well and enjoy the myriad of opportunities that the Upper School holds. I look forward to watching your development over the coming years.

The School Community has grown and evolved since 2000. Our parents are welcomed into our school to assist with many activities and outings for which we are all most grateful. Our Open Door Policy allows for good communication between home and school; this can only be beneficial for our children and we should always strive to ensure that lines of communication remain strong. With email, text messaging, letters and homework books this should never be an issue. I would like to thank the hard work of all those parents that help in school and also the hundreds of members of our community who have been members of the Friends of Acorn House and Beechwood Committees. There have been balls, parties, school fayres, bingo nights, beetle drives, secondhand uniform sales, BBQs and sports days. Each committee member has worked very hard to provide a magical experience for all those present, whilst having fun and also raising significant funds for the school. We cannot thank you enough for your support, hard work and commitment.

And what about all of the activities that the children experience not just in lessons, trips and on activities week, but all the clubs before, during and after school that are run by the staff. This is a time when staff get very close to the children to find out snippets of information that can complete each jigsaw puzzle of each child, but it is also a time when children find out about staff and about how they themselves tick. Our school would be so different without the breadth of opportunity that is provided. I think that the children should show their appreciation for the efforts of the staff.

And as for food, we now have two children's kitchens from one of which wonderful smells waft into my office – I shall miss the Christmas cakes cooking! Our fabulous catering facility for school lunches was a significant investment into the future lives of the children. Eating well and healthily is so important for their futures and I am delighted that the Junior School catering team plays such a strategic role within our school. My thanks to them for all of their hard work each and every day. So what of the present? This year we have been full almost to the brim. Staff and children have been very busy, with wonderful results not just in academic areas, but in dance, drama, art, music and physical education. Wonderful performances at the Eisteddfod from Year 2, our choirs and steel pan group, as well as many individual performances. A super whole school display in the Art and Craft section of the Eisteddfod, which was absolutely stunning. The children in the Speech and Drama section of the Eisteddfod also performed very well. The whole staff are very proud of all those children who participated. Well done!

This was the first year that we were able to send a full Girls' Team on our sports tours. With the majority of the girls in Year 5, the experiences gained will prove invaluable. They learnt so much from being away from home, staying with hosts families whilst playing a great deal of hockey, netball and rounders. They were a credit to the school. I am looking forward to being able to watch them play some of their home games next year, along with the boys' teams. A fantastic £8055 has been raised for charity this year. A magnificent £2355 for Les Bourgs on a very wet day was enhanced by the sight of 4 senior members of the College staff – the Principal, Vice Principal, Mr Walton and myself cycling in the rain! I don't believe the staff thought I could do it, but then again at 3pm we were there again to welcome parents back to Beechwood to pick up their children. Believe it or not I managed to walk around the Chelsea Flower Show the next day, with no side effects. I must be fitter than I thought! So, we have had a great production, super concerts, open days and mornings, Friends events and lots of fun this year. Staff wise – new staff have joined us and some are leaving us – I wish each of them well in the coming years. This has been a happy year, tinged with some sadness, for the staff and there is a lovely atmosphere in school, as there have been 3 staff engagements, 2 weddings to come, 3 babies to arrive and my retirement!

I believe that children are influenced by those adults that they look up to, respect and want to be like – be these parents, relations, teachers, sports stars, pop stars, but they need to be nurtured and guided to achieve all that they can, especially when they are young. I strongly believe that a child's early years experiences are tremendously important for their future well being. These experiences help them to become individuals in thought and action. At Acorn House, our children receive the very best start to their 14 years of formal education within the College, because of the care, thought and excellent range of educational activities that the staff provide for them daily from Wrens to Year 2. At Beechwood, specialist staff in PE, Music and Art especially enhance our already wide curriculum. These curriculum areas allow our pupils to broaden their horizons – try something new maybe. With ex Beechwood pupils representing Guernsey in many fields, we can feel excited that we may have inspired them when they were younger to aspire to be the best that they can.

So in 14 years the buildings have changed significantly, the grounds and play areas have been improved, the curriculum has been further developed and the staff body has grown. There are now 67 staff - teachers, teaching assistants, secretaries, caretakers, catering staff all assisted by the ground staff, bursarial staff and upper school special constables from time to time. They all work together to ensure that the children are safe, secure and educated to a very high standard. I shall miss this fabulous, hard working and caring staff, but know that the children will be cared for and taught very well in the years to come. I have worked with three Principals, three Bursars, two Chairmen and 27 Directors all of whom have given me much support to make the significant changes over time. I thank them all for their help, advice and time.

So what of the future? Mine will be very different - I will have time! I will be a free agent. I should have time to do what I want to when I want to, rather than a life governed by the school bell and term dates. It is 41 years since I began teaching and now I am to stop. I won't miss the endless meetings, the paperwork or lack of sleep. I will miss my school community: the children with their hugs and smiles, their sense of fun: the staff team – my extended family, Beth my great supporter without whom I would feel lost at times, Andre who has been with me through thick and thin and for whom nothing has been too much trouble: my parents – their sense of loyalty, support, commitment and kindness that they frequently show. I shall miss all of this.

However, I am looking forward and there is so much I should be able to do. Spending time with Richard my husband, my supporter, without whom I could not do my job as I have done. Travel is somewhere near the top of our list, as is spending time with our children and grandchildren, redesigning our garden, seeing our friends and making the most of this lovely island. Our list is endless!

In September there will be a record 380 children at the Junior School, new staff and a new Headteacher. The school will be in the safe hands of Jim Walton, who I believe will also learn to love and care for it and guide it through the coming years. I wish him luck and good fortune. The Junior School will always have its own special place in my heart and I will look forward to watching it evolve and blossom, but this time from the sidelines. I wish the children every future success, work and play hard and make the most of every opportunity you are given, then you will really enjoy your Junior School years. I wish you all present a very happy summer break. I hope that the sun shines on August 9 for Miss Wenman and Mr Dowding on their special day. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your good wishes for my retirement! The Junior School now is so different from the Junior School of the past and, as for the Junior School of the future – who knows? we will just have to wait and see.

Finally, may I say that it has been a privilege to lead the Junior School during fourteen transformational years and I wish Jim and his team every success.

**Suzanne Battey**  
**Headteacher Elizabeth College Junior School**  
**2000-2014**