



MEMORIAL CONCERT FOR RACHEL SMITH

Tuesday 19 July 22

A good teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others

Your lasting legacy is held within the generations of children you have inspired, both with your teaching and in the example of a life well led.

Your love of teaching, and teaching with love, has surely changed so many lives.

ADRIAN WATERS

Chair of BGN Governors



Rachel was a fantastic family member. We miss her enormously, and I know she was well respected in your BGN community too. She taught us all many things, and she will be remembered in many different ways, giving us inspiration by the person she was – hardworking, a strong Catholic, fun, dedicated to supporting everyone to be the best they can be: loyal, fair, honest, elegant, positive (particularly in the face of setbacks) and caring. We can continue to learn from her example and live our lives (however long) to the full, as she did.

SALLY ELTON-CHALCRAFT

Rachel's Aunt



Rachel was a tower of strength and always knew how to say the right thing to you, regardless of the situation. She was unique in the fact that after she had shown her compassion for your situation, she left you feeling very blessed.

I remember her dashing into briefing with her bowl of cereal and then being so composed to say a most amazing prayer which always set you up for the day.

When I became Deputy Headteacher, Rachel popped her head round the office door and said this is for you and then dashed off. When I looked, it was a prayer book – one I treasure and still look at most days.

Rachel was very special and will be missed by all who knew her.

VERENA CHILDS

Former Deputy Headteacher



This picture says it all really. I do wish you were still here. We had such a laugh on this choir trip to Italy. Thank you:

- For your friendship
 - Your laughter
 - Your thoughtfulness
 - Your compassion
 - Your truth
 - Your musicality
 - Your endless patience
 - For the smirks across choir
 - For the trying to keep the seconds in line
 - For the presents
 - For the belly rubs for my fluffy girl
 - For your time
 - For your witness
 - For your discipleship
- Thinking of you.



ALI WILLIAMS

Head of Art



I joined BGN as a Teaching Assistant in 2008 and Rachel welcomed me with open arms. I was allocated to the RE Department and developed a strong friendship with her. I often sought Rachel out for her advice and wisdom and in 2016, she agreed to be my sponsor. I miss her deeply.

GAIL WAGSTAFF

Pastoral Assistant



My memory of Rachel will always be of her drinking diet coke and running across the playground with her heels on.

LYNN LOWE

Learning Support Assistant



Rachel was a true witness of faith and service throughout her life and time of illness. She kept Christ at the heart of all she did in service to your school community and the wider Diocesan family. I know she will be greatly missed.

RICHARD SMITH

Adviser for Catholic Education (Secondary)
Diocesan Education Service



'Oh enter then his gates with praise, approach with joy his courts unto...' Thinking of Rachel with her radiant smile being welcomed into the heavenly kingdom. A reflection that has given me some consolation over the past few weeks.

The precious gift of friendship with Rachel will be treasured forever. May this beautiful and courageous woman of faith, who never stopped giving, rest in the peace of Christ.

JO HURST

Governor



'And for ourselves, the intrinsic 'Purpose' is to reach, and to remember, and to declare our commitment to all, the living, without deceit, and without fear, and without reservation.

We do what we can. And by doing it, we keep ourselves trusting, which is to say, vulnerable, and more than that, what can anyone ask?'

June Jordan [American poet, essayist and activist 1936-2002]

For me, these words by June Jordan reflect how Rachel lived her life: selflessly; courageously; gracefully.

CLARE SMITH

Headteacher St Joseph's Catholic Primary School



Rachel was someone who was always there when you needed her. She was always willing to listen, even asking me for advice sometimes. I will always remember her lovely nature and smile. She was fun to be around.

TERESA MEADOWS

Specialist ASD Learning Support Assistant



Having met Rachel when she worked on a previous pilgrimage in recent years, I can remember the gentlest person, with a beautiful smile, who was well respected by students and staff.

SARAH HICKMAN

Birmingham Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage



I will never forget how Miss Smith's smile really made my day; her kindness would lift everyone's spirits. My fond memories include spending the last 6 years singing beside her as an alto with the youth choir. We would always have a giggle when we got it wrong! One of the highlights of my time with Miss Smith was sat around the pool in Barcelona on the choir tour when she treated me to a hot dog whilst we sunbathed. I would always look forward to my lessons with her as she truly was an inspirational teacher who I will never forget.

ELEANOR FAIRLEY

Sixth Form Student



I will always remember Miss Smith as the bubbly, energetic character she was. Maybe having a few too many on the ski trip and dancing like there was no tomorrow, was truly so beautiful to watch; growing up with her guiding me in the upper seconds in choir, I will always remember her loud singing voice and reproduce it with pride. She truly was the definition of joy and her legacy will live for a very long time.

OLIVIA DOBSON

Sixth Form Student



Rachel Smith was such an inspiration to all of us at BGN. She was so kind, thoughtful and giving in every way.

We always had lots of fun on many occasions, both in and out of school.

STUART SMITH

Former Site Manager



Thank you for always being there for anyone who ever needed you. Your presence was like no other. Your kind words and beautiful aura always made everyone feel at ease and loved in so many ways. Always full of grace, joy and happiness, your strength was inspiring to us all. Your style was second to none; always so glamorous. But what makes you even more beautiful is that you had the biggest heart, and lived out the Gospel values each and every day. I truly believe you were always an angel that God sent to look after us and show us his love daily. Thank you for just simply being you. We all feel so extremely blessed to have known you; sending you love and blessings today and always. We shall always carry you in our hearts.

DESTINY HALE

Former BGN Student



Miss Smith was an iconic presence for everyone throughout my years at BGN and truly embodied the values and morals the school championed.

She took a keen interest in all the students, regardless of whether she taught them.

I still remember how valued she could make you feel when you talked to her, and I was impressed by how well she remembered all of us. She was a role model to us, and we will remember her as the heart of the school we loved.

Rest in peace Miss Smith.



Although Miss Smith never taught me RE, she taught me so much more. She radiated such strength and I will forever admire her for this.

I will never forget our memories in the choir together as seconds – the countless carol singing trips to the supermarkets and nursing homes, as well as the trips to Italy and Spain!

The most admirable woman, who will keep singing in everyone's hearts.



She had this really calming presence about her, even though she was always running around the school with the jobs she had to do.

She always had time to say hello to me and ask me how I was. Singing with her in the choir will be one of my favourite memories of her.



What a wonderfully supportive and inspiring teacher and individual. You supported both my daughters through their time at BGN and we have wonderful memories because of you.



I have many fond memories – the most important was Miss Smith's phone call during the Covid lockdown to reassure me of my A Level results. Her unwavering commitment to my education gained me an A*, taking me on to study Law. This opportunity would not have arisen without her and I am extremely grateful.



I have known you for 27 years. First as my teacher and then as my colleague and most importantly my friend. I have always relished every minute I have ever spent with you. Whether we were singing in the rain for the Pope's Mass, ski-ing down a mountain together on a glorious day, or gathering for a delightful BBQ in Mrs White's garden. It has been so much fun.

Without doubt, my favourite time of the week was our RE department meetings when we got to share everything that is awesome about you. Your clear, forward thinking, great ideas, excellent teaching skills – I would need pages to write it all down.

We have shared a lot of laughs over the years, and I have always delighted in a good chat and gossip with you, but one of my favourite stories of yours was about you joining the canoeing team during your Oxford University days. Due to your dislike of an early alarm call, there was only one possible solution to squeeze those extra minutes of sleep into your day – to go to bed the night before fully dressed in your rowing gear so that you could hop out of bed the following morning and leap straight into action. It was a tall order, but you soon realised that early mornings on the water were not for you and went back to wearing your pyjamas instead!

I miss you SO much. Thank you for every minute.

TARA MAWN

Assistant Headteacher



Lourdes was an experience I will never forget. Miss Smith was with us through it all. She was cheerful, joyful, prayerful and made the trip the best ever.

Apart from always being a positive person in everyone's life, she was someone I could turn to whenever I needed guidance. She was the best teacher, form tutor, choir leader and friend.



Rachel's kindness, the presents at Christmas and the lovely treats she would buy from her favourite bakers in Burton 'Birds Bakery' were an absolute joy. Even after her funeral we found we gravitated to Birds to buy one final treat as we were overjoyed when we saw the shop in front of us on our way to the church.

I remember on another occasion during Mass in our chapel a couple of us were in tears after the beautiful singing and it being so close to family passing away; Rachel saw us and just came and sat with us and held our hands - it is a lovely memory I have of her kindness and thoughtfulness.

DEBBIE FREEMAN

Finance Officer



Rachel accompanied me on several BGN trips including a trip to the Globe Theatre, London for the day in March. We began the day with a '*Miss Smith coffee order*'. This is a very detailed intricate order that involves a side of A4 paper to get it right! Then onto a whistle stop tour to Camden where Miss Smith spent 45 minutes trying to pick between the street food.

I love how relaxed and free Miss Smith could be, soaking in all the sights of London, walking miles with the students, and embracing every second. This trip finished with a performance at the Globe Theatre. A true delight!

HELEN FURNISS

Head of Expressive Arts



When we left Year 13, Rachel wrote to all the pupils in her class lovely individual letters which was so thoughtful. It gave me great strength and hope, moving on with the next phase of my life.

This letter is kept with much love in my room on the wall alongside a wooden cross, also given to me by Rachel, and is always there to look at when I need a little inspiration.

AMY FREEMAN

Former BGN Student



Miss Smith was an inspiring woman. Her contagious positive attitude shone throughout her life and I'm sure that her shining personality will forever be brought forward into the future of all BGN staff and students. She was inspiring to me especially, with her love for music, encouraging me to find my place within the choir and allowing me to share the love for the community that she guided with her shining personality.

MADDY CLARK

Sixth Form Student



Miss Smith was genuine, loving and extremely caring. She knew all members of the choir well and was devoted to serving them. She helped extensively with the Lourdes pilgrimage and went above and beyond the call of duty to support us. She was the most incredible, kind-hearted person.

EMILY ROWE

Sixth Form Student



In all aspects of her life, Rachel embraced, valued and committed herself with great JOY.

For her this meant: faith above all, generosity of spirit and always putting herself last.

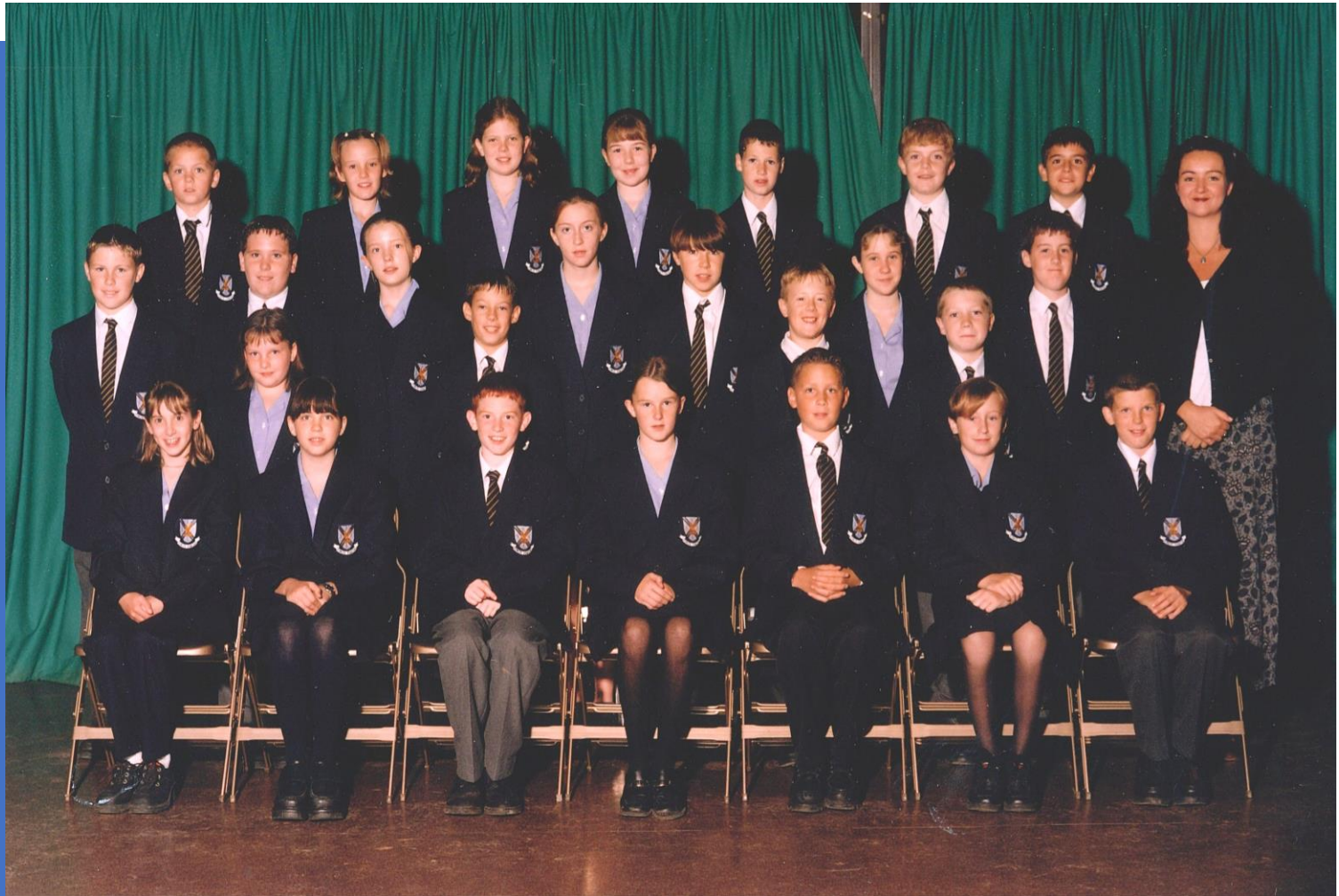
J – Jesus

O – Others

Y – Yourself

ANITA MUTTON

Teacher and Governor



It's hard to put into words how much Miss Smith meant to me, particularly as we became close during Sixth Form. She was such a role model to me. She was inspiring by simply being her. The way she treated everyone with so much compassion and respect, how she always made time to listen to you, and to offer words of wisdom is what made her so special.

I have her to thank, in part, for the person I am and the places I have reached today. Working closely with Miss Smith on Youth Choir projects, going on choir tours with her, and other moments such as Father Bill's retirement celebration, are some of the greatest privileges of my life.

I will always be grateful to have known her, and for the memories we shared together.

REBECCA NUTT

Former BGN Student



'Beautiful on the outside and on the inside' [Bishop Steven Wright]

Lovely, loving, stunning friend to us all, whether from Burton, Banbury or Bicester. Best letter writer, card sender, present giver, late comer, fashion guru, sun worshipper, ardent shopper, Martini sipper, generous to a fault, WONDER WOMAN!

Humble, hardworking, gifted and talented, super intelligent, highly qualified, never boastful, never proud.

Uncomplicated, private, pragmatic, able to see the good even when many of us were less than we ought to be.

Always forgiving and forgetting.

Attention to detail, capacity for mountainous amounts of work, perfect penmanship, always going the extra mile with a smile. That beautiful smile!

Never seeking the limelight though the limelight always followed you around...

Inspirational teacher, loyal colleague, an outstanding person who never wanted to stand out.

You carried your crosses with such quiet dignity, your sufferings with barely a complaint, a legacy left that can never be erased or forgotten.

Thank you Rachel, our beautiful friend.

CATHERINE WEAVER

Former Headteacher



Rachel held the bags at Alton Towers while Tim Wright and I went on all the rides! She said it was because she'd visited recently with her Cousin and Auntie, but it was obvious that Rachel was a person who derived as much pleasure from watching other people enjoy themselves as going on the rides herself. It was such fun and it felt almost as though we were out for the day, just the three of us; although we were in fact on our way to Soli House with forty Year 10s in tow.

It was during that retreat that I realised what a discerning, insightful true leader Rachel was. I was consciously aware of how much I was learning from her; I could almost sense myself growing. I am so happy and grateful to have known you Rachel!

RACHEL NUTT

Teacher



Remembering many a Carol Service and Concert singing alongside you. Smiling at those silent sideways exchanges, eye rolls, wry smiles and giggles when Mr W was berating the altos for some misdemeanour. You always knew just how to 'manage' Mr W if he was getting a little irascible and, in managing the choir, you were definitely the yin to his yang. I feel privileged to have joined you on a fabulous choir tour to Rome in 2010. Such happy times.

Rachel, my beautiful friend, choir buddy, spiritual guide, and inspiring teacher of both my girls. I'm so blessed to have known and worked with you for the last 16 years. So dear to me and so many, I miss you more than words can express. You lit up our school and lives with your brightness. Remembered always with love and thanks for all you did and all you meant to BGN. xxx

LIZA CAMPBELL

HR Officer



Rachel, was such a special lady and a person who, whenever you saw her, was always so kind, helpful, and friendly. From the day I started at BGN she was always so lovely to me. I will never forget that.

I joined the choir, and I was very nervous, but Rachel always made me feel welcome, and gave me confidence.

I remember the Sundays especially when Rachel used to bring us treats from her favourite bakery in Burton. I always received a present from her, and a thoughtfully written note in her beautiful handwriting. I still use her last present to me, which is a beautiful candle that sits in my living room, and I often think of her when I see it.

Lastly, I will miss Rachel's smile, and her beautiful clothes. She will never be forgotten.

THERESA IREDALE

Learning Support Assistant



I was lucky enough to have Miss Smith as my Sixth Form Tutor. I will forever be grateful for the unwavering sense of calm she brought to our form in what can be a very stressful time when being confronted with what we wanted to do when we finished school.

Miss Smith had a whole host of qualities which made her an amazing teacher but one which always stood out to me was how thoughtful she was and how well she knew her students. When the time came to do our form assembly, she created roles for every student; each playing to their own strengths. She always remembered all our birthdays, organising a card and present for each one of us.

During our last form time, she wrote speeches about each of her form group highlighting just how well she had got to know us during our time with her. Miss Smith's thoughtfulness and genuine desire to see students succeed was not just limited to their time at BGN. When I came to re-apply to university in my gap year, Miss Smith was all too willing to help make my application as strong as possible to give me the best chance of getting where I wanted to be. Even after I had attained my place at university Miss Smith still emailed me a year later, keen to know if I was doing ok and enjoying my course.

I am truly grateful for the mentor I gained in Miss Smith. No problem was ever too big for her and she was always there when I needed to speak to her. She contributed significantly in making my final two years at BGN memorable and I will miss her dearly.

YASMIN BUTLER

Former BGN Student



I will never forget Miss Smith's period 5 RE lessons on a Tuesday afternoon. It got to the point after lunch time when motivation would somewhat creep away from me. But her kind nature and excellent thoughts around her lesson planning and for who she was as a person will forever stick in my head. Let's just say you made it everything and more. It is the little things in life which have the most impact and I, for one, will never forget you and all the hard work and time you gave to not only me, but the rest of our year group.



One of the most thoughtful and genuine individuals I have ever met. Miss Smith was the best teacher and even better Form Tutor. She remembered every person's birthday in our form, getting everyone a birthday present and organising us to sign their card, as well as creating the awards for 13 Calcutta, all tailored to our personalities. She remembered the little things and cared about each student in the school. Her contributions to Mass, Born for This and Youth Choir were unmatched. Such an inspiration.



There is no equal.

FRASER LONG

Catholic Senior Executive Leader



I feel privileged to have known her, laughed with her, cried with her and prayed with her. This I do know; Jesus will have welcomed her home as 'a good and faithful servant'.



TEACHER

T is for Trusting

Miss Smith was patient and kind, and staff and pupils alike trusted her. She recognized that everyone had something special to share with the world, even if it was only their time! She guided pupils through budding friendships and always made her classroom feel like a safe place. Her kind words and her caring smiles were a treasure to store.

E is for Enthusiastic

She was amazingly talented; musically, academically, pastorally; her sports' skills in netball matched her skills in teaching. She was enthusiastic about everyone's learning, staff as well as pupils. In mass she could both look a pupil in the eye and get them to behave and also get them to sing their heart out! She always encouraged pupils to sing with a joyful noise!

A is for Amazing

Her skills at critical "academic" teaching were extraordinary. She was amazing in that, no matter the issue or dilemma, from broken arm to broken heart, Miss Smith always kept her cool. Her kind, caring demeanour and leadership were inspiring; she was a true mentor and beloved by all.

C is for Charisma

We all know people who appear and -- no matter what they say or do -- everyone loves them. That was Miss Smith. She was beloved by many for her firm, fair and consistent manner. She had amazing charisma and could keep you engaged and amused as she shared her BGN teaching adventures about students (past and present), teachers, parents and even naughty stories about her student teacher days. She won the hearts of many with her beautiful character.

H is for Hopeful

Those students who were not so gifted academically but aspired to greatness elsewhere were still held in high esteem by Miss Smith and lauded for the hope they offered, and were offered. Whether this was in the parts they took in school theatre events, musicals or in passion plays, she always encouraged them to take on leadership opportunities in what initially might have seemed the smallest of ways. From these small beginnings, amazing characters grew and flourished who might, otherwise, have been overlooked.

E is for Extraordinary

Miss Smith also sang and played the flute and was a terrific organiser in musical events. She was fiercely dedicated to the BGN Youth Choir and was a tremendous taskmaster. Her skills in bringing on the quietest of singers continues to support a legacy of extraordinary determination. We remain in awe of her teaching and passionate spirit, and grateful for her firm belief in every aspiring pupil's artistic abilities.

R is for Resonate

Miss Smith's manner of teaching the messages of the gospels, and the messages of faith and hope always resonated with her students. Through her work with CAFOD, she was 100% convinced that, through the power of education, people could rise above adversity and achieve their dreams. We all will be forever grateful to her for her steadfast commitment to living a life filled with seeking her passion and teaching us all to do the same.

ELIZABETH BURAK

Teacher of Science



A highly dedicated and passionate educator, with a deep faith and a true sense of responsibility towards the students in her care. Rachel Smith was a remarkable character. An old-style school teacher, who famously skipped the celebration of her 40th birthday to help A Level Philosophy and Theology students in after school classes. A woman who, without expectation of praise, quietly helped behind the scenes in Youth Choir, and in every musical performance I was a part of. What some people might not have realised is that Rachel was a gifted musician herself, and could sight read effortlessly, another talent to add to the countless that she never boasted about. She didn't take any nonsense, and I was certainly at the receiving end of a scolding or two, but she'd never hold it against you. During one memorable performance of 'Born for This' I found myself frozen with anxiety during my song. Looking up from the podium that I was standing behind, I locked eyes with Rachel, who mouthed the lyrics back to me. She knew every word of every song. She nodded to me, and I sang, knowing that if I messed up, she'd sing silently alongside me.

Sound of Music. Christmas concerts. Carol singing. Rome 2010. A truly beautiful human being, who leaves the community of BGN a better place than when she found it. Rest in peace, Rachel.



She was my Sixth Form Tutor for two years and I have nothing but amazing things to say about her. She definitely nurtured and looked after me a lot, but I actually had the amazing opportunity to serve her and say thank you. I went to Exeter University on their Cornwall campus so I was working as a waitress in a restaurant on the sea front in Falmouth.

Miss Smith came with her sister and childhood friend and recognised me almost instantly! I was able to chat and catch-up with her and even buy her whole table drinks as a thank you for everything she had done for me. It was a little, but it means a lot and it is definitely something I was grateful to have as my final interaction with her.



I'll never forget Miss Smith calling me the night before our Theology exam. I was suffering from anxiety and she took time outside work to call, reassure me and give me a much needed boost of confidence for the next day. Even just the little notes she would leave on essays, she was constantly uplifting and encouraging us as students and young people. I will never forget her.



During my time at BGN, I was lucky enough to have a lot of great teachers, but one encouraged, supported and inspired me – the wonderful Miss Smith. Her enthusiasm was infectious, always smiling and with boundless energy. No tough love just excitement about what she could teach her pupils. It never did feel like she was teaching you because she wanted to share so much with you; her teaching was effortless. A teacher who got to know you as a person. She held after school revision sessions to help you to be the best you possibly could. The most inspiring thing about Miss Smith was that although her health was challenged, she never lost faith. I am grateful to have known an individual who was and is such a credit to the school. I hope heaven is pure, love filled and magnificent just like you. It was a pleasure to have known you.



Rachel Smith
changed my life.

FRANCESCA

Exeter University Student



As a former Headteacher of BGN I am proud of many things that contributed to the life and spirit of the school during my time. The thing I am most proud of though has to be recognising the potential in Rachel when she first came to the school on a teaching practice. It wasn't long before I appointed her as a permanent member of staff and I have to say that was a very wise decision.

Rachel was always positive and contributed so much to the life of the school and its values. She inspired many people, both staff and pupils, and she truly lived her faith. She is sorely missed.

DAVID DAWSON

Former Headteacher





Thank you to everyone who has made this Concert possible, especially Mr Wilson and the BGN choir who Rachel was so involved with.

May God give you...

For every storm a rainbow,
For every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.

[BGN Prayer Book]

We thank God for allowing us to share in the life of Rachel and we pray that we continue to spread the gifts, values and joy she shared with each one of us.

May she rest in peace and watch over us all from her heavenly home.

A good teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others