

# *Memories of* RICHARD COOK

*A compilation of  
recollections, anecdotes,  
reflections and comments  
from former students,  
colleagues and friends*



It is with a heavy heart that I must advise you of the untimely passing of our dear friend and former colleague, Mr Richard Cook. Richard passed away peacefully on Wednesday, 8 October, surrounded by his family.

Richard made an outstanding contribution to Bournemouth School since joining us in 2002; he only retired due to his failing health in August of this year. He was a teacher of religious studies, ethics and philosophy, a head of department, a head of house and a head of sixth form. As a sixth form leader he helped secure an Ofsted “outstanding” grade in 2024. Throughout his time at the school, he worked tirelessly and selflessly to support students and colleagues alike, always giving freely of his time to support extra-curricular trips and visits.

When he retired, the school’s leadership and governors decided that we would celebrate his outstanding contribution to our community over so many years by presenting an annual award in his name. We will be awarding the “Richard Cook Prize for Care and Compassion” for the first time this year.

Richard appreciated this gesture, writing to me at the end of last month. I feel it fitting to share with you some of his words:

*“When I came to Bournemouth School, I joined initially to get experience in teaching at A-level. At that point, I had no idea I would spend the rest of my career at the school. Throughout my time, I have always felt very well-supported, given the opportunities to grow and develop my career and also participate in the wider life of the school community, through pastoral support and wider school activities. I fondly remember my trips to Rome, the Battlefields, and ski trips, as well as school performances, musical concerts and house competitions. The highlight of my time at Bournemouth School was being Head of Sixth Form where I had the opportunity to lead a team supporting the students in their move from GCSE to A-level and out into the wider world. It was a challenging but rewarding time with the school undergoing major changes, not least the transition from the old Common Room to the new state-of-the art facilities, as well as the challenge of COVID. There has rarely been a day when I have not enjoyed being a member of the school.*

*“Bournemouth School’s ethos is made by the quality of both its staff and, in particular, its students and I think that I have been very fortunate to find my place here.”*

On a personal level, I have rarely encountered someone with so much energy and determination to secure the very best outcomes for all students. I’ve not known of anyone to deal with failing health with such positivity. We will all have so many fond memories of “Cookie” (as he was affectionately known), and I am sure that over the time to come these will be shared and his life celebrated. His enthusiasm and passion for learning have touched the lives of so many.

Richard was a thoroughly decent human being. He always gave more than he ever took. He would have celebrated his 55th birthday next month. He deserved more out of life than the hand that he was dealt. We will all miss him terribly, but his spirit will live long in our hearts and minds; nevertheless, the corridors of our school seem a little emptier today.

The news of Richard's passing has been shared with colleagues and students today, mainly through assemblies. We have offered support to all, and this will continue in the days to come. Some of his former students are already proposing ways in which we can further celebrate Richard's contribution to the school. We all want to ensure that our “Cookie” has a lasting legacy.

Richard's family and his many, many friends are in our thoughts.

*Dorian Lewis*  
*Headmaster, Bournemouth School*

Made RS cool when RS was not cool, heroic.

— *Liam O'Leary*

---

Mr Cook was a fantastic teacher and a lovely man. I thoroughly enjoyed his philosophy lessons. His passion for his subject was clear to see.

On top of this, he always made the time to support students in any aspect of school life. He will be truly missed.

— *Sam Kirby*

---

Richard's humour, kindness, empathy and humility made him a highly respected colleague. Always cheerful; he always had time for us. Super clever: sharp and engaging in any conversation. Even with his failing health, he showed incredible positivity and was still thinking of others by doing what he could. A genuinely decent guy and we will miss him very much. Rest in peace, Richard. You were taken too soon.

— *Kathy Castle*

---

Richard was a brilliant, enthusiastic and thoughtful teacher, he brought so much joy and passion to my RS classes and I will remember him fondly.

— *Henry Blandford*

---

Mr Cook was honestly the final face I remember at Bournemouth School and who was there for me during my hardest times during sixth form. He always tried his best for each student with no discrimination and always gave each of us his most genuine effort. I hope that he will always be remembered for his firm kindness.

— *Shay*

---

So sad to hear the passing of Richard. But feel so lucky to have encountered such a wonderful human being in life, one of the best.

— *Jin Cox*

---

I will never forget Mr Cook's funny jokes and his kindness towards me. He brought such fun, exciting energy to each lesson he taught to me during GCSEs and that really reflected how much he wanted us, the students, to succeed and grow. He was always there to support me throughout my A levels, as the head of sixth form, even through times of uncertainty. I would like to thank him for guiding me to get to the position that I am in today and creating incredible memories for me to remember and cherish forever.

— *Jordan Pang*

---

I will miss Mr Cook, he was a brilliant teacher, thank you so much for all the fantastic lessons, I will always remember his famous saying of "Every time I open my mouth, an idiot speaks," which was very ironic.

— *Jason*

---

Mr Cook always treated us with respect, and as equals. He would hold us to the same moral standards as he would any of his peers, while also not being afraid to have a good laugh with us.

Especially fond memories of the music trip to Lake Garda, where he had a very watchful eye around the hotel! Any of the other staff there will remember for sure

Rest in peace, Sir.  
God bless.

— *Sam Humphriss*

---

A unique and amazing personality who brought so much support and joy to students' lives. Never one to judge and one who many students would have turned to when they felt others may not understand. A great loss, but more importantly an amazing legacy left.

— *Max H*

---

Mr Cook was my form tutor in year 10 and 11, as well as my A level philosophy teacher, and I got to see first-hand that he had an effortless ability to look after and mentor every single student that had the luck of being in his class. He had an incredible talent of being able to gracefully, tactfully and casually get the best out of teenage boys who were more often than not hell bent on doing anything but.

Every single time school felt constrictive or unfair, he would be able to just talk it through, hash out how we felt (and sometimes even pull back the curtain a little and explain why we weren't wrong), and then we'd end up doing what we were meant to anyway. As a teacher myself, I can only begin to recognise how remarkable a skillset that is, that require such a deft touch and sharp mind, combined with interpersonal skills and a great sense of humor.

A lot of students would see him as Darth Vader sometimes; he would calmly enter a room that was filled with out-of-control kids trying to bully any unfortunate substitute teachers, and the silence would be instant. The ability to switch on such a fierce and just wrath was many students' main impression. (We definitely sang the *Imperial March* from Star Wars at him – from a safe distance). But having had the joy of knowing the real Richard Cook, it was simply a tool in his wide and varied arsenal that he used in order to achieve his goals of exceptional outcomes at Bournemouth School.

I personally felt deeply affected hearing the news of his passing. He was perhaps the teacher I was able to rely on most at Bournemouth School, and when I got into trouble, it was his words of advice that I found myself sticking to. When I had a little run in with the police after some silly behaviour, I found it wasn't letting down my parents that affected me, nor the headmaster nor any friends. It was Mr Cook catching me in the corridor one lunchtime, and telling me that I can do better, and that he expects it from me, which caused a significant shift in my direction.

It breaks my heart to think I won't get to bump into him in Southbourne, where we were lucky enough to share a pint or two in later years, but at least I am able to carry his wisdom and outlook on life with me every day.

— Lyle Anderton

---

Mr Cook was my favourite teacher throughout the entirety of my education. He had a way of challenging students' ways of thinking, whilst always giving everyone the opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts. I'm now a teacher myself, and I had always hoped that our paths would cross again one day. I will take his teachings with me into my own work, and he will live on through all the lives he has touched over the 20+ years at Bournemouth School. A truly great man. May he rest in peace.

— Tom Breeze

---

Mr Cook is the very reason I became a teacher of religion and philosophy, inspiring me to pass onto future generations the virtues of critical thinking and open-mindedness.

— *Josh Todd*

---

The extreme passion of Mr Cook made lessons in sometimes boring areas very interesting. Having him as a teacher will always be a fond memory of my experience at Bournemouth School.

— *Harry Sherwood*

---

It was an honour to work with Richard Cook for so many years. He was one of those rare people who brought out the best in everyone – kind, generous, always ready to listen, and always validating. Students and staff alike looked up to him and sought his advice, knowing he genuinely cared. I could talk to him about anything – personal challenges, small worries, or just everyday life – and he always helped you see things from a different perspective. I also loved his wit, intelligence and humour, which made every interaction a joy. His hard work, drive, and compassion were truly inspiring.

Richard touched countless lives, and his legacy will live on in all of us who had the absolute privilege of knowing him. I am just so gutted by his passing.

Richard's mother can be immensely proud of the son she raised – an exceptional human being whose kindness, integrity, and generosity left a lasting mark on everyone he met. He set an example to aspire to – the kind of person I hope my own son grows up to be.

He made the world a kinder and better place simply by being in it. The love, guidance, and compassion he showed continue to ripple through the lives of those who knew him, and the values instilled in him – his warmth, empathy, strength, and humour – will live on in all of us he inspired.

I will never forget him.

— *Katy Bosworth*

---

I'm so sad to hear of Mr Cook's passing; he was one of my favourite teachers at school. His classes were always engaging and friendly, and fostered a life-long interest in philosophy and critical thinking. I'm sorry not only for his family, but also for the future kids who won't have the chance to learn from him. One of the greats!

— *James Atkinson*

---

Mr Cook was one of the best teachers I ever had. He made PRE one of my favourite lessons with his fun methods of teaching and exciting questions. He opened all our minds to deeply understand the world more. I miss having him teach for us.

— *Amaru Oshima*

---

One of my favourite teachers, always willing to help with any issue I had, with understanding and kindness, and the right balance of seriousness and humour.

— *Chris P*

---

Around 2010 he made a philosophy club for students during a lunch break. It was awesome, but in hindsight very selfless to make that happen in his own free time. Truly a legendary teacher who helped influence my time at BS.

— *Jau*

---

He was an outstanding mentor and teacher. I remember when I was feeling stressed during my final year of A levels; he took the time to sit down with me and just have a normal conversation about life, not school. It meant a lot.

— *Abdul*

---

As a family we spent 10 years at Bournemouth School. We dealt with Mr Cook as a teacher, Head of House & then Head of 6th Form. He was always professional, kind & humorous, all at the same time - a truly winning combination! Both of our sons, James & Toby, have happy memories of him as their teacher & mentor.

We shed quite a few tears when we heard the very sad news... Sending our condolences to his family, colleagues & friends xx

— *Karen Anderson*

---

He was always such an enthusiastic teacher and I loved that he was an Arsenal fan too! Gone too soon.

— *Aiden*

---

I had the pleasure of being taught by Mr Cook in both GCSE and A level religious studies (circa 2006-2009) and subsequently went on to study religion and theology at university – in no small part thanks to the interest, curiosity, and eventual fascination with religion, philosophy, and ethics, inspired by his engaging teaching style and personality.

In a lot of ways, Mr Cook was almost a contradiction – he walked the line between approachability and authority, between humour and informativeness, between compassion and fortitude – but always with the goal of informing, inspiring and most importantly challenging his students to think in ways they might not have before.

On a personal level, it's no secret that I was in desperate need of positive male role models at that point in my life, and I genuinely do credit teachers like Mr Cook, whose guidance, whether they realise it or not, helped to shape my life for the better.

So here's to Mr Cook, Richard, Cookie – taken too soon but never forgotten.

— *Alex Faulkner*

---

I left Bournemouth School in 2005, but I do remember Mr Cook when he joined in 2002. He taught me philosophy A level, and was my form tutor for a year (it may have been the year he joined actually).

I remember him as a hugely interesting, intelligent and thoughtful man who we all enjoyed being taught by – and we respected him. One memory I have was of him coming into school on a Monday with scratches on his face – saying he'd fallen into a bush over the weekend! We laughed with him as we speculated as to what had happened to result in him ending up in a bush.

I am saddened to hear of his passing, but warmed to see he had such a long and distinguished career at the school. Our thoughts are with his friends and family.

— *Oliver*

---

Mr Cook was an amazing teacher who went above and beyond to make school life interesting, enjoyable, and always did so with a smile on his face. I was lucky to be able to be taught RS in my earlier school years by him, where he felt very personable, even to the younger students. In sixth form, I remember him as being friendly and eager to treat students like adults, on equal grounds.

— *Dan Haywood*

---



It is with great sadness that we remember Mr Cook or “Cookie” to so many of us. He was a cornerstone of Bournemouth School: calm, fair and deeply respected. His patience, sharp wit, and quiet authority set the tone for generations of students.

Mr Cook embodied the very best of Bournemouth School – its values, its spirit, and its belief in helping every student realise their potential. Through his example, he helped shape not just those he taught, but Bournemouth School itself.

Whether guiding a class, offering a quiet word of encouragement, or simply enjoying a cup of filter coffee, he carried himself with a warmth and steadiness that left a lasting impression on everyone around him.

His influence endures in the students he taught and in the spirit of the school he helped to shape.

Thank you, Cookie. You’ll be missed dearly, but never forgotten.

— *Matty Gardiner*

---

Mr Cook was an exceptional person. His empathy, compassion, and humour equally matched by his professionalism, enthusiasm, and expertise.

Every lesson started with his statement: “When you are immaculately attired; shirts tucked in all the way round, ties and top buttons done up, shoes, not trainers, on your feet, and you are prepared to be silent, you may sit.” He’d then proceed to effortlessly compare and contrast different ideas and philosophies, never failing to completely captivate a classroom. His lessons were always a highlight of the week.

He was more than an excellent teacher, he was a role model who made every student feel important and heard. Mr Cook was an inspiration to generations of students at Bournemouth School and he will be sorely missed.

— *Luke M*

---

My favourite memory of Mr. Cook was his acerbic and clever wit. I always had my hand up in his classes because I was so interested in debating and discussing philosophy, he was a very engaging and intelligent man. R.I.P. Sir, you have touched the hearts of me and my friends.

— *Dan Bottiglieri*

---

On a slightly dissapointing results day Mr Cook took me to one side whilst I was upset and made me stop and recognise the progress I had made over my years at Bournemouth School, and the achievements I had despite my initial disappointment. He took time to ensure I had a plan going forward and shared how proud of me he was, I'll never forget that conversation and it was one of many amazing, supportive conversations we had during my education at Bournemouth School

— *Sian Conway*

---

I was a student at Bournemouth School from 2005-2012 and Richard was my teacher for many of those years. I always found him to be a kind, compassionate man with time for everyone.

— *Rob L*

---

Mr Cook was an inspiration. Not only was he an excellent and dedicated teacher, but also a thoroughly kind and decent human being who always had time for everyone.

— *Luke Staton*

---

I always wondered why he seemed to have so much respect and awe from the other boys as I went through my first five years at the school, until I had him for the first time in sixth form back in 2009/10. Then I finally understood it.

He was exceptional, easily one of the best teachers I ever had (and we were very blessed at the school). Superbly talented but also able to unlock something indescribable that felt different, a sense of questioning things and thinking in a way most teachers couldnt do. The lessons felt like they reached another level academically, and he was also able to bridge that human gap, connect and empathise with the students in a way that felt special.

Very saddened to hear of the news, but also reassured by the amount of people messaging which reminds us of the life long experiences we carry from our time at school, and in this case so so positively.

— *Kurtis Seaton*

---

Mr Cook was a great teacher and head of house... He made Elgar proud!!

— *Robin Michaels*

---

He was an uplifting and calming presence around the school at all times. Always upbeat and saying “hi” to those that passed him. Paired with a true sense of no nonsense! Was a welcoming figure way back in 2009 when I joined

— *Daniel Gilbert*

---

The passion he displayed teaching a level philosophy was so inspiring I remember it fondly years later, truly a one of a kind teacher in my life

— *Sam King*

---

It is incredible sad to hear of his passing. He was my teacher for the philosophy and ethics A level I took in 2013. One of the reasons I continued religious and theological studies at university level was due to the way he taught and related to us. He was my favourite teacher at Bournemouth School by far and I would have wished to reconnect with him.

— *Ahmed Ahmed*

---

Absolute legend, as head of house and religious studies teacher in my time at the school he was always there for me

— *Tom Marshall*

---

Fondest of memories, Mr Cook was incredible in the classroom and Richard continued to be a reassuring mentor after my time at the school too. He taught in a respectful engaging way and strived to make us better students and people too. Went above and beyond for all of his students, sorely missed.

— *Scott Jenkins*

---

Amazing person with an amazing attitude. It was an honour and absolute privilege to have studied at the sixth form whilst under his supervision.

— *Shahram Rasoll*

---

I am truly so sad to hear this news. I was part of the Bournemouth School family a decade ago along with my mum, Sam Kanan (Holloway). I know how very fond of Richard she was and I remember sharing the experience of an incredible music trip to Lake Garda together. He was always so helpful, considerate and so very kind in the time that I knew him. I think it goes without saying that after reading all of the messages, kindness ran in his veins. Thank you Mr Cook. Emma Imberg (Hooper)

— *Emma Imberg (Hooper)*

---

I was in one of his first classes when Mr Cook joined. Mr Cook's teaching in philosophy completely changed the way I looked at life. I owe him a great deal of gratitude. I'm so pleased he stayed so many years after I left the school and became such a big part of the school.

— *King-Chung Chong*

---

Mr Cook was a huge inspiration through leading our chess team to win Eton School's national championship.

He was witty, talked to everybody as an equal, and understood a vast range of philosophies and always made effort helping us students in the right direction.

Rest in peace sir.  
Thank you for everything

— *Jezz Baker*

---

Playing a 1st XI cricket match; Mr. Cook had volunteered to umpire. I opened the bowling and the opposition batter clearly edged a ball to the wicketkeeper. My teammates and I ran off to celebrate only to turn around and see Mr Cook unmoved.

There were some strong opinions exchanged but in true Mr Cook style; a friendly chat, smirk and joke after the game soon cleared the air.

RIP, Sir. You'll be missed.

— *Richard Powell*

---

Mr Cook was an approachable and likeable figure among the students. He was head of my house (Elgar house) when I was in sixth form and, reflecting on this time, he was an excellent example of a good leader during a critical period of life - he was dependable, good-humoured, kind.

I'm grateful for the role he played in my life and I'm sure many current and former students, staff, and members of the wider Bournemouth School community feel the same.

No doubt Mr Cook will be sorely missed by all who knew him, and in the wake of his passing it is a time to honour the positive contribution he made to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young lives.

— *Daniel Redfearn*

---

I'll never forget the introduction Mr Cook gave me to ethics and morality. He captured my imagination by creating passionate classroom debates around simple issues such as the trolley problem and the lifeboat dilemma. I always looked forward to his lessons, the open and honest conversations and the way he treated students and staff alike with respect, dignity and fairness. He'll be missed.

— *George Shorey*

---

Just wanted to add my name to the I'm sure huge list of people that were touched by Mr Cook. He was my first RS teacher in Year 7, and I had many interactions, classes and trips with him through my 7 years at the school. In Year 7 he sent me home with a letter of commendation for a project I spent a lot of time on, which I really appreciated and still hold onto to this day. He will be so very dearly missed

— *Tom Dodgson*

---

Mr Cook had managed to strike an exceptional balance between keeping a class of 15 year old boys disciplined while still being a fun teacher to have. On the subject of his good humour, I remember I had made a joke in his class about the homophonic nature of euthanasia and "Youth in Asia". I didn't realise that Ali G made the same joke (I didn't know about him then). Mr Cook then went to show the clip of Ali G discussing medical ethics, we all had a good time with him.

— *Ojan*

---

Mr Cook was easily one of the best teachers I ever had, it was rare as a teenager to feel genuine respect from adults but I always felt that from him.  
It's been 13 years since I left Bournemouth school but I will always remember Mr Cook – my deepest condolences go to his family and friends.

— *Mike Anderson*

---

One of the very best teachers at the school during my time there (2005 - 2012). His classes were exceptional and ones I would look forward to more than any other. He inspired us to challenge our beliefs and encouraged open and challenging discussion on various issues whilst also having such a good sense of humour and being a thoroughly decent man.

— *Ben Hosking-Smith*

---

Though I did not have Mr Cook as a teacher on any more than a temporary basis and 15 years have passed between my departure from Bournemouth School and today, I remember him very well with fondness, warmth, and I'm tremendously sorry to hear of his passing. It speaks volumes that in the relatively infrequent interactions we had quite some time ago, he made such a strong and positive impression on me. I have no doubt he leaves a superb legacy behind at Bournemouth School and it's alumni. Thank you, Mr Cook.

— *Alex Crabbe*

---

I'm going back almost twenty five years and I remember Mr Cook as being authentic with us as students, engaging – like he was a peer, and that endeared us to him. An inspiring teacher and a lovely bloke. As an adult I'd bump into him locally, and was always uplifted by his chats. He will be sorely missed.

— *Gareth Wilson*

---

Really enjoyed my chats with Teach at the *Wight Bear*. He will be dearly missed

— *Robyn*

---

I was at Bournemouth School from 2007-2014, and one of my clearest memories is being taught RS by Mr Cook. I loved the way he spoke, his matter-of-fact word choice, his mannerisms – he acted very casual, but you could tell that he was really interested in the topic and in teaching us. His classes added to my belief in Jesus and the Christian faith, through challenge and debate. Rarely did anyone misbehave in his classroom.

At some point during school years, I decided to produce a video about faith, and I asked Mr Cook if he would feature in it. He said yes and kindly allowed me to interview him, giving up his lunch time. He didn't profess faith, but I loved his answers, his perspective, and his understanding on the topic. He helped shape and sharpen me.

Years after leaving school, I bumped into him in the *Spyglass and Kettle* pub. I approached him to continue the discussion we'd had so many years before! He remembered some in my class with fondness, and we indeed struck up a conversation about faith.

I shall always remember these conversations, and it's only now, in a time of loss, when one realises the true impact of a person. I will remember Mr Cook and our conversations for the rest of my life. God bless him, God bless his family, and God bless Bournemouth School.

— James Ryan

---

Mr Cook was one of my favourite teachers from my time at Bournemouth School, and I have many fond memories of his classes. He sparked an interest in philosophy, and encouraged looking at the world in such different ways, that has still endured with me to this day. Few teachers were quite as passionate and knowledgeable about their subject as Mr Cook.

Funnily enough, the memory that comes to mind was a lesson where Mr Cook was teaching us about meditation and its role in various religions. After an explanation of how to quieten the mind, regulate our breathing and focus, the whole class had a try at meditating, and before you knew it, thirty adolescent boys were quietly reflecting (and maybe a few of us were napping). At the time, we all thought it was funny, and that Mr Cook likely just wanted some peace and quiet for a few minutes. But surprisingly, I still use the same practices he taught us that day when I'm stressed, overwhelmed or struggling to sleep, and it's helped me many times.

— Jean-Daniel Byrne

---

I will always be grateful for the time and care he showed to me through his teaching of RE. He particularly helped me with my personal statement for university.

— Jude Cook

---

My condolences to Richard's family.

Mr Cook was not only an inspiring teacher, but a great man who helped me to achieve what I wanted to achieve during my time at Bournemouth School. His depth of knowledge of philosophy and religion are only outshone by his passion to help students achieve the best possible outcomes, and I was a beneficiary of his kindness and support, helping me go from a very poor predicted grade under previous teachers to achieving an A\*. I truly owe a great deal to him.

He was and will continue to be one of the most well respected teachers in school by students, parents and colleagues alike. The world is worse off without his unmatched energy (always with a mug of coffee in hand) and his passion for giving students an appreciation of the deep philosophical questions – something that sticks with me today.

Rest in peace.

— *Finn Wakeham*

---

I was so sorry to hear the news about Mr Cook. I have nothing but fond memories of being taught by him from 2007-2013. You could always tell he was brilliantly intelligent but he found a way to make his classroom a thoughtful and welcoming place. Moving into the sixth form, I remember his kindness and enthusiasm. He'd be the first person to stop and say good morning and would gladly find time to chat. I was delighted to bump into him in the *Wight Bear* pub a few years ago. He was as lively and conversational as ever, and it was a joy to spend time swapping stories and catching up. That is how I'll choose to remember him: smiling, laughing and happily giving away his own time to brighten someone else's day.

— *Jonathan*

---

Mr Cook was always a joy to talk to when I attended Bournemouth School. I distinctly remember when I was in Year 8 misbehaving in class and I was sent out. Mr Cook was walking the corridor and came and spoke to me for a good 5 minutes and instead of giving me a telling off, he cheered me up and really boosted my mood for the day. It's a small thing but it really resounded with me: acts like that really show the true colours of a person and can change their lives. A small act of kindness can lead to a lifetime of gratitude, and Mr Cook's kindness and laughter will forever hold a place in my heart. Thank you, sir.

— *Jayden Lockyer*

---



I was so sorry to hear such very sad news and send my warmest thoughts to all at the school and Richard's other friends and family. My son Sam had only been taught by him for a little while (for A level) but his passion for the subject and warmth as an individual had made a big impression. Touched by how very sad the staff were yesterday Sam said "I wish I'd known him better." We share all of your profound wishes that the world and the school could have kept Richard longer. It seems we were privileged to have him for the time we did.

— *Helen Morgan*

---

I remember throughout my time in Bournemouth School, he was present.

From the open evening (prior to Year 7), he offered an enthusiastic tour of the school to my parents and me (something neither mum nor dad have forgotten since), to some deep felt conversations over what's next in my career. His RS teaching and his drive to educate made lessons so thoroughly enjoyable.

I remember him saying he wondered what lied after life, and in his words, "I'm hoping for an eternal nap, sounds quite nice, that."

I recall winning the Sports Athlete of Year 7 (9 or 10 years ago), not realizing a trophy was up for grabs, and him running over to find me in the crowd.

So many small moments made him who he is, and the values of the school were his reflection, of which I am sure he was proud to play such an important role.

From sharing Elgar house success, he was always first to praise success of his students, and his wit isn't easy to come by.

My thoughts are with his family, and friends. Rest easy Richard.

— *Liam Saunders*

---

Cookie was one of the finest teachers I had the privilege of knowing. His relentless pursuit of knowledge, and an even greater ambition of passing on that knowledge to his students, is a huge reason for my own interest in philosophy and the entire world. I was never the greatest student in the world, but he always went the extra mile to ensure I achieved my potential both in and out of his class. Mr Cook has left his corner of the world ten times better than when he found it, and touched the hearts of everyone who had the honour of being in his lessons.

— *Jacob Packer*

---

I was so shocked and saddened to hear of Mr Cook's passing. I remember him as a lovely and decent man who couldn't do enough to help his students. He always had a positive attitude and a friendly demeanour, and will be sorely missed! Rest in peace, sir.

— *Kyran Rickman*

---

I had the privilege of learning A level religious studies under Mr Cook's teaching in the 22/23 and 23/24 academic years. He was a brilliant teacher, full of knowledge, wisdom and humour. He genuinely cared about his students and had a passion for philosophy and its continued relevance today. I'll always treasure so many of the memories shared in his classroom. I made a Powerpoint of mine and my classmates' favourite memories with him. I'd love to share it with the school as a nice way of remembering what joy-filled memories he left behind.

— *Daniel Faithfull*

---

I can honestly say I would not be alive without the console of Mr. Cook. He was like a second father to me, and he will always be forever held in mine, and many other of his students' hearts.

— *Harry Magee*

---

Mr Cook was brilliant at just letting you grow into yourself in your later teens. We tried to start up a house band to support junior musicians with getting used to performing in front of large crowds. Mr Cook was unquestioningly supportive and we were able to create a real sense of community because of the support he offered. We owe a lot to you Cookie!

— *Matt Walsh*

---

I'm so saddened to learn of your passing; I was looking forward to the day where I might bump into you so that I could thank you. Thank you for teaching me; thank you for every effort you made to make Bournemouth School such a special place to be; thank you for the kind and humorous manner in which you did it all.

— *Kit Musson*

---

Mr Cook was a very caring and supportive RS teacher and head of sixth form for my son. I remember him supporting him with his work via an individual Teams call during the COVID lockdown.

— *Rachel Reid*

---

Absolutely devastated and shocked to hear the news of Mr Cook's passing. A true gentleman who went out of his way to help those around him and whose laughter and smile lit up any room. He will be deeply missed.

— *Dillon and Shay Dhrona*

---

As a parent whose two boys have benefited immensely from his wisdom and selflessness I'm genuinely upset to hear of his passing. I remember our first parents' evening when it was face to face still: a slightly dishevelled man but with the persona of someone who was more than a teacher. I since looked forward to all of his updates and hearing what he had to say. Everyone remembers their favourite teacher and our boys have Mr Cook.

— *Rupert Baddeley*

---

Cookie was a fantastic colleague and so welcoming to me as a new teacher just starting out, his energy and wit were in equal measure and he was so passionate about staff and students alike. One of life's true legends!

— *Rich Heard*

---

He was a brilliant teacher, I always looked forward to his class on a difficult day as he made it thoroughly enjoyable. Watching *The Matrix* together with the class was an utter highlight. RIP Mr Cook, you will be missed.

— *David Appleton*

---

An outstanding, beautiful person that made sense of the world. Huge impact on me and my view of the world

— *Iain Hallam*

---

Mr Cook was always my favourite teacher throughout my time at Bournemouth School.

I fondly remember Mr Cook rushing into our classroom any time we had him period 1, slightly late, with a coffee mug dripping around its rim. The coffee clearly did its job, as his lessons were always engaging, and his wit was sharp enough to ward off disruption from cocksure boys. He was genuinely funny, though the reason he was so well-liked was because he treated students and staff with respect, remaining authentically himself in those interactions.

There were different Mr Cooks throughout my school journey: the Mr Cook I met in Year 7 who made a patient effort to build our confidence in our own ideas; the Mr Cook from Year 9 who managed to make RE the favourite subject for boys starting to dislike most subjects and teachers; the Mr Cook in Year 11 who de-escalated quite an embarrassing outburst from me in the canteen, giving myself and others deserved detentions, but treating us with respect (and finding humour in the situation); and finally the Mr Cook in sixth form, who blew our minds with big ideas, and treated us as peers whom he only sometimes had to reprimand...

Mr Cook is the sole reason I went to university – not because of his lessons (which were fantastic and the reason I studied philosophy/was inspired to become a teacher), but because I wasn't going to go to university at all.

Two days before the UCAS deadline, Mr Cook stopped me in the corridor and asked me what universities I was applying to. I told him that I wasn't going to university as I was planning to be a site labourer. He was very quick to tell me it would be a waste for me not to apply as he thought I would thrive there. He diplomatically convinced me to apply "just in case I changed my mind". He told me that if I drafted a statement that evening, he would take a look at it for me the following morning. I did, he gave me important feedback, and I went on to be accepted to a university which has had a transformative effect on all aspects of my life. It isn't an exaggeration to say that I would be an entirely different person today without him – I'd also be miserable, as realistically I'm far too delicate for manual labour.

I've often imagined bumping into Mr Cook to thank him for everything, perhaps even sharing a coffee. I am deeply saddened to hear I won't have the opportunity; however I am certain other ex-students will have been able to give their thanks over the years.

I have no doubt his family and friends will be inundated with positive memories about Mr Cook, so I hope my memories help draw that wider picture of who he was and how he has touched so many people.

— Jack France

---

What a fabulous man and teacher Mr Cook was. His unique and brilliantly humorous outlook on life, philosophy, religion, and education was something that always kept me intrigued and motivated, instilling in me a passion to learn I have never lost since. The hardest part of being Mr Cook's student was having to leave at the end! There was a man I could have listened to and known, for certain, I would leave the room inspired and that much more enlightened than before.

Outside of the classroom, Mr Cook's leadership of Elgar house during my time at Bournemouth School steered us through the finest of years and triumphs; I will always remember those cold early afternoon Elgar assemblies, at the time held in the school's neighbouring church, in which Richard spoke words of wisdom, light, hope and truth: words which, despite the frosty air, always kept us coming back for more. Whether it was his wicked way with words, or the ways in which he could turn any subject into the most captivating, I will forever be grateful for the part Mr Cook played in my life and cherish those memories. May he rest in peace.

— *Henry Grau*

---

A gentleman, a scholar, an academic, a friend, a mentor, an inspiration, feel so very lucky to have known you and worked with you. You were more than kindness and compassion and your legacy of care and teaching will never go away. Rest now. We will miss you more than you will ever know. x

— *Rachel Hamalienko*

---

We are very sad to hear this news. We both respected Richard's intelligence, knowledge, commitment to the job, as well as his integrity. He was an inspirational teacher for both the students and the staff. He will be sorely missed.

— *Nick and Régine Chlubek*

---

Richard was such a lovely person who made me feel so welcome when I joined Bournemouth School in 2007. He was always willing to offer help and a friendly ear, always with a smile. I know that the students held him in great respect and that he made a difference to many lives. My thoughts are with his family.

— *Kerry Milligan*

---

So sad to hear of Mr Cook's passing. As a parent of Harrison and Jasper Adams, we often used to chat about school at dinner time, saying that he was our favourite member of staff. Mr Cook was Harrison's sixth form mentor, a very genuine, approachable and fair man and I would often seek him out for a chat or to say hello.

We are very sad to hear this news, but what a legacy, helping, mentoring and improving so many young men's lives. Bournemouth School was lucky to have Richard, he will be so fondly remembered in this house.

With the help of Richard's influence:

- This year Harrison has just graduated with a first class masters degree in architecture from Cardiff University and is working in a classical architecture practise
- Jasper just graduated from University of Southampton with a 2:1 in geography, and is launching a trading platform with friends.

— *Victoria Adams*

---

I am really saddened to hear the news of Richard's passing. For the 7 years that I worked with him, he was a wonderful colleague and a good friend. He possessed a real alchemy as a human being. I was always struck by his kindness and compassion towards the students. He would always put their interests first and was often a calm voice of reason advocating on their behalf. I remember his assemblies where he spoke movingly about global and local events alike, always making profound points that resonated with the students. As a colleague, he was always so supportive and friendly and I thoroughly enjoyed his company. He had a terrific sense of humour and a wicked laugh that belied his kindly nature. Bournemouth School and all of our lives will be emptier without him. I am so sorry for his family's loss and for the deep upset that this will have caused at the school. You have my utmost sympathy and compassion at this difficult time. He was a lovely man and I will always remember him fondly.

— *Alastair Sinclair*

---

So sad to hear this news. Mr Cook was an amazing teacher and head of sixth form. Both my boys who attended BS thoroughly enjoyed their time with him. Our thoughts and prayers to his family.

— *Arlene Edge*

---

Mr Cook was one of the most thoughtful teachers throughout my seven years at Bournemouth School. He helped me through difficult times in my personal life and was someone who was generous with his time with anyone who needed it. RIP Mr Cook

— *Tim Wilson*

---

Cookie was an inspiration and his approach to teaching led to my desire to want to further study philosophy at university. Mr Cook helped tirelessly with my personal statement, even outside of school hours.

When seeing Mr Cook socially earlier in the year he still had a wonderfully positive approach to life, despite the challenges he was facing with his health. I think that sums him up.

A fabulous teacher, but an even better man who exuded tremendous character. He will be sorely missed and was a highlight of my time at Bournemouth School.

— *Oliver Collier*

---

Will always fondly remember Mr Cook - his lessons would always be the most engaging as he wasn't afraid to go off script and explore ideas for the better of those willing to genuinely learn and think critically. A brilliant man who I will always remember cup of coffee in hand, and the most blatant passion for his profession.

— *Jon Mills*

---

I'll always remember Richard for his genuine kindness and the way he cared so deeply for both students and colleagues. Nothing was ever too much to ask of him – even when he was busy, he never said no. He always managed to see the best in people. I'll miss the chats we used to have, his brilliant mind, and the way he could recall just about anything. But most of all, I'll miss his laughter – and that gentle, understated humour that always had a way of lifting your spirits. Richard made a lasting difference in the lives of so many, and I feel blessed to have known him.

— *Angela O'Connell*

---

I was taught by Richard from 2005 to 2009 through GCSE and A level religious studies. He was also out form tutor for most of our time at Bournemouth School. Few people could make lessons as engaging and his ability to bring students into debates without feeling pressure led to many healthy arguments and developed critical thinking in his students. Always down to earth, always respectful of all people and cultures and always inspiring us to be better people: it is abundantly clear that he left the world a better place.

I am extremely saddened to hear of his passing and send my deepest condolences to his family, colleagues, students and the community more widely. My friends and I will certainly be raising a toast to him and sharing our fondest memories.

— *Chavez Hyndman*

---

I was deeply saddened to hear of Mr Cook's passing. Throughout my time at Bournemouth School, he was a constant source of support and encouragement.

I always saw him as someone who genuinely nurtured and believed in me, and his presence had a lasting impact on my school experience. Mr Cook was a charismatic and compassionate man, known just as much for his boundless love of coffee as for the kindness he showed to everyone around him. I can say with certainty that my time at Bournemouth School would not have been the same without him.

It feels truly fitting that the Care and Compassion Prize should be named in his honour; I can think of no one more deserving of such a tribute. Rest in peace Mr Cook.

— *Ian Redfearn*

---

Always had time for all students, especially SEND students. Lovely man!!!

— *Hazel Lambon*

---

I remember when in Year 11, Mr Cook left our exercise books in his office for what seemed like months, meaning we had to write on sheets of paper for countless lessons. It didn't matter much, as his infectious and passionate personality made him an excellent teacher and friend I will remember forever. Rest in peace Mr Cook.

— *Luca Gallicchio*

---



A sad day for Bournemouth School.

One story:

After developing a totally unique card game, lower sixth Elgar regularly played during form time while Mr Cook sipped coffee at his desk.

After one particularly rowdy hand, Mr Cook couldn't resist and came over to ask what we were playing.

I took my chance.

"It's called None Of Your Business, sir."

It actually made him laugh out loud, a proud moment – it's not easy making a teacher laugh.

We explained the rules and he watched us play for a hand or two, and said we could carry on as long as we didn't gamble!

One of my favourite memories of him. I would have loved the chance to teach him that card game.

One more.

Mr Cook comes into the classroom and there is an undeniable bad smell in the air. "Is it me or does it stink in here?" he asks.

"It only started smelling in here when you walked in sir!" comes the reply.

Mr Cook strode purposefully to his chair as a chorus of "Waheys" erupted, but he couldn't help but flash a smile at the audacity of it!

A highly respectful, highly respected teacher and a good friend in our sixth form classroom. We'll miss you. Rest in Peace, sir.

— *Harvey Hancock*

---

Thank you for being a really great RS teacher. I enjoyed your lessons very much.

— *Jack Guillen*

---

I will always remember the way Mr Cook held everyone at school to the highest standards. His short speech before every class, always beginning with “When you are immaculately attired...” with all students standing to attention behind their seats set a standard for the expectations in his classroom and at the school. His dry sense of humour, cutting one liners and ability to hold a room with his uncomfortably long silences only enhanced his reputation with the students. He was a great teacher and an even better man.

— *Callum Crockard*

---

Reflecting back on my time at Bournemouth School from 2006 to 2013, lessons from Mr Cook had more of an impact on me than I could imagine.

RS was not a subject I would have chosen to take given a choice, but having being taught by Mr Cook, it was a subject that I did enjoy and did look forward to what was being taught.

I only took RS to GCSE, but what Mr Cook showed in his lessons was to approach life with curiosity, be open to different ideas and don't accept things at face value.

Given this sad and unexpected news, these approaches to life will be a constant thought in my mind and also that life is not a rehearsal and should be enjoyed.

— *Harry G*

---

Ranging from GCSE RS to assisting my personal statement and writing my reference to get into uni, he was constantly there to support every student educationally and personally, even helping me navigate some hard times in my own life and keeping me on track. I wouldn't be where I am today succeeding how I am without his influence on my life.

— *Jude Smith*

---

Mr Cook was my son's tutor for only a short time, but in that brief period he made a truly positive impact. He was kind, patient, and showed a genuine interest in the lives of young people. His passing is such a sad loss, and his legacy will live on in the hearts of those he inspired.

— *Ronni Chen*

---

He was an excellent teacher in every way, very caring man, very sad to hear his passing.

— *Toby Ingram*

---

Mr Cook was my RS teacher while I studied at Bournemouth School. Lessons with him were memorable and always enjoyable. Thanks to his hard work and determination, I was on track to be most successful in RS. This is very sad news and he will be greatly missed by all of us.

— *Deshawn Mahoney*

---

Mr Cook always believed in me. I saw him a few months ago and he told me he was very proud of me for not giving up my dream of becoming a dentist and accomplishing it.

— *Dr Patric Saraby*

---

Mr Cook was inspirational for all of my four boys. A much loved and respected teacher who was known for inspiring fascinating philosophical discussion. RIP Mr Cook

— *Beth Dodd*

---

When I dropped out of university after it not going to plan the first time around, I contacted Mr Cook for guidance. He spoke and helped me tailor my personal statement for submission to university. I am working for a tier one construction company (*Skanska*) as a graduate mechanical engineer, with high hopes of progression through the company.

— *Spencer Donnell*

---

This is devastating to hear. Mr Cook was a wonderful teacher and fantastic to be around; you got the sense he loved teaching what he knew best. He filled the classroom with his boundless energy, was a great laugh, all with a mug of coffee permanently on the go. Go well, Richard – greatly missed!

— *Connor Sharp*

---

I believe I had my first religious studies class with Mr Cook in Year 9, and it completely reinvigorated my passion for the subject. The first thing that comes to mind at the thought of Mr Cook is his effortless humour. I'm sure anyone who met him will be instantly familiar with his dry wit and sarcasm, which were a highlight of his lessons and truly engaged the class in his teachings. His teaching was also exemplary, having a brilliant ability to present religious debates without a hint of bias and give student contributions equal credence and zero judgement. I am studying at Level 4 at University currently and still stay in very close contact with my Bournemouth School friends; the news of Mr Cook's unfair passing has greatly saddened us all. His distinctive air of enthusiasm in both personal interactions and in teaching was positively contagious, and I strive to follow his example once I start a career of my own. Mr Cook will be sorely missed by myself, my friends, and countless others.

— Kai Johnson

---

The best teacher I had at the school – for GCSE and A level RS (five years). Full of stories and quotes that made the workload of school that much brighter.

An excellent teacher and human being.

— Ben Coles

---

In a sixth form assembly Mr Cook spoke of the changing times of our life. As a philosopher he referred to Sisyphus and said that it didn't matter the size of the rock but the strength and perspective of the person pushing it. I can understand now that he didn't just say that for us and our studies but it's how he viewed every day. When he stepped down as head of sixth form he did more to accommodate his A level class. I remember one on one sessions just to look through essay questions. I feel overwhelming privilege to have had him as a teacher. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him and his laugh.

— Connor Murphy

---

When I left the school to pursue my business mid year 12, Mr Cook was one of the only teachers who shook my hand and wished me well, despite me being poorly behaved in the time before I left. RIP

— Jonny Keen

---

Mr Cook was a brilliant man who taught me for six of my seven years at Bournemouth School. He was always kind and humorous with his students, and inspired a devoted following of RE through to A level. He was respected and loved by all students because he treated them like they were capable and intelligent young men. His lessons were as equally likely to make you learn about something profound and well beyond the remit of the curriculum as make you burst out laughing. He inspired me to study philosophy at university and then become a teacher, and I have many happy memories of his lessons.

— *Ellis Goldney Sidley*

---

Mr Cook was my favourite RS teacher. He was so passionate about what he taught and I felt very engaged in his lessons because he delivered them so well. He really knew his subject and he always gave a good answer to any question asked. There was truly something unique about him. I remember one time in class when he started looking in his pockets for something and he found 20 or so individual pound coins in his trouser pockets! We shall never see his like again.

— *Sam*

---

Mr Cook was by far the most enthusiastic and energetic teacher I've ever had. His humour kept the whole class engaged, and his utter love for religious studies made us all want to excel. We all wanted to make Mr Cook proud, with that great, big smile which lit up the classroom. Bumping into him as he grabbed his daily coffee is a fond memory of mine, and he will be dearly missed by all of sixth form and religious studies students.

— *Rhiannon Wilson*

---

This is such sad news. He was kind and caring to both my sons particularly when in sixth form and one needed a little extra support. Deepest condolences to all the staff and Mr Cook's friends and family.

— *Catherine Eden*

---

Always a joy to be around – overall lovely guy!

— *Dan Turner*

---

I am absolutely devastated by the news, he was my favourite teacher. I have lots of good memories: he really left an impact. One that comes to mind was, after I had left the school, I returned during a term break in my second year at university to collect my A level certificates. I had hoped to bump into a familiar face, but to no luck. On my way out the main door I saw Mr Cook, who was rushing off to attend to one of his duties. He greeted me so warmly, was genuinely pleased to see me and we spent ten minutes or so catching up; I told him I was living with Jake, another former student, and he grinned and said I bet you two get up to all sorts. We spoke about how he was now head of house, and how everything had been going at the school. It was a small moment but it reaffirmed what a genuinely great guy he was: he clearly had somewhere to be but wanted to know everything I had been up to. I was so pleased we got to catch up. He was a special person, funny, very smart, a brilliant teacher, yet he always had time for good story, he had already lived a fascinating life. RIP Cookie, you will be missed.

— *Jordan Faith*

---

It always felt like I never took RE lessons seriously at the time, but with hindsight I came to realise Mr. Cook's mode of teaching made the subject so interesting and fun to the extent it never felt like school in the same way maths or English did. I have fond memories of the discussions and class debates he guided us through. Rest in peace to a real educator.

— *Dakota Harris*

---

Richard once caught me compiling a rating of my favourite chocolate biscuits whilst in designated study time downstairs. Rather than scolding me for this he sat down with me for a minute and taught me the history of the chocolate biscuit and added some biscuits to my ratings chart. He then insisted I put the cookie at the top of the ratings. I never realised that was his nickname until I saw the news today. Rest in peace, Cookie!

— *Jacob Graham*

---

Mr Cook was an incredible mentor during my UCAS application. He never made me feel like just another applicant, but rather demonstrating genuine care and thoughtfulness throughout my application. His perspective was invaluable, providing insightful critiques and encouragement along the way. It was an honour to be taught by someone of his character, truly one of a kind.

— *Zi*

---

I first met Mr Cook as the teacher who supervised my 11+ exam day – the fact I remember that some thirteen years later shows what an impact he had on my entire journey at Bournemouth School.

As my RS teacher from Y7-11, he brought the subject to life, bringing big debates, existential questions, and a genuine sense of wonder and curiosity to the classroom. Some of my fondest memories at Bournemouth School were in RS classes led by Mr Cook. His classroom was the place I got a real love for learning, thinking about ethics and the world around me, and most importantly learning to ask “why?” I can assuredly say that because of Mr Cook, I looked forward to every RS lesson, despite him often responding to the question, “Sir, can I go to the toilet?” with the sarcastic answer of, “I don’t know, can you?”

Mr Cook was also my head of house and later head of sixth form. As he was in class, he was always on hand with sage advice and a thinking approach to life that, as a junior student, shaped how I was at school. Much of his guidance, usually disseminated through a (usually overrunning!) house assembly in St Francis’ church, has stuck with me more than a decade later.

Mr Cook was a fantastic teacher and person, and someone who was integral in shaping my own – and doubtlessly so many others’ – school years and way of looking at the world.

— Alex Keen

---

Having Mr Cook as head of sixth form during my tenure at the school had a visible and profound impact on myself and my peers around me. I remember when I’d drive in early to beat the traffic to school and the first person I’d see and talk to each day was Mr Cook as he unlocked the sixth form common room. He was always happy to help with any query and had our best interests at heart at all times. Mr Cook will be deeply missed.

— Reece Brewster

---

In Year 12 we had to make a *Tiktok* video promoting the sixth form. My group asked Mr Cook if he could film a short video for us and he enthusiastically filmed one for us, which represents the kind of teacher he was.

— isabella

---

He would always come check on me in the cafeteria and ask about my day, RIP legend.

— *Bella*

---

I recall him trying to tell me off for a behaviour point for which I'd acquired for stapling a student's shirt but I just recall him laughing the whole time.

— *Daniel Morgan*

---

Mr Cook was an amazing RS teacher who always tried to teach my class with his best. Whenever I saw him around school he would always be sharing his happiness around him, I truly admired his niceness and he was surely one of my favourite teachers.

— *Shin Yong Ree*

---

Rest in peace, Mr Cook. A legend and one of the most caring and understanding people I had the pleasure to encounter through my time at Bournemouth School.

— *Joel Hulme*

---



## **Eulogy delivered by Dr Dorian Lewis, Headmaster, and Luca Gallicchio, School Captain**

It is an honour and privilege to be able to share some of my thoughts about Richard.

Cookie was a very special colleague – I am sure that he would have been highly embarrassed by the way in which we will all talk about him with such warmth and affection. Richard was very special because he never thought that he was just that.

I joined Bournemouth School in September 2009, by which time Richard was already a well-established member of staff. Recently, Richard told me that he thought that he had found his place at our school. Much to our great relief, he never even thought of looking for a job elsewhere. Had I ever been called upon to write a reference for him, it would have been something like this:

Mr Cook has made an outstanding contribution to Bournemouth School, since joining us in 2002. I joined the school in 2009 and quickly found him to be totally reliable, loyal, and a person of integrity.

Throughout his time at the school, he has been an exceptional and inspirational teacher of religious studies, ethics and philosophy. With passion, enthusiasm and seemingly boundless energy, he makes lessons memorable and enjoyable. Richard has also held a number of positions of responsibility such as head of department, head of house and a head of sixth form. As a sixth form leader he helped secure an Ofsted “outstanding” grade in 2024. Richard always works tirelessly and selflessly to support students and colleagues alike. He gives freely of his time to support extra-curricular trips and visits; should you ever need someone to act as a fire marshal at a concert, to drive the minibus for a theatre trip, or to accompany a ski-trip, Richard will be the first to volunteer his services.

His former head of house states, “All of his students like and trust him. He is not only a gifted teacher but also a naturally kind, caring and sympathetic form tutor.” Colleagues love his warmth, compassion, wit and humour.

I have no real criticisms of Richard. I have had to ask him to simply slow down, and to recognise that very few can keep up with the speed of his thought processes. He is occasionally late to his lessons, not intentionally, but because of the multitude of issues that he has tried to deal with on the way. Look beyond the at times unkempt appearance and any unease you may have about being on the edge of chaos.

Do not waste money on providing Richard with a desk; he will rarely stay still long enough to use it. He will use it only as somewhere to deposit paperwork and marking (in his own idiosyncratic filing system). He will also prefer to use one of his

many *Asda* carrier bags rather than a briefcase or laptop bag. You will find it helpful to have an endless supply of coffee available, and do provide him with a large, insulated coffee mug, preferably with a lid to spare your carpets.

Were he to leave Bournemouth School, we would be heartbroken and would miss him dearly. Nevertheless, I can do little other than recommend him to you in the highest possible terms. He would be an asset to any school – you could not ask for a better colleague.

Given Richard's lasting impact upon those who were fortunate enough to have been taught by him, it seems only appropriate that we should hear from one of them. Our School Captain, Luca, will now offer some thoughts:

Today, we celebrate the life of the sweetest and most inspiring man: Mr Cook. Mr Cook truly was one of a kind. I only knew him for one and a half years, but it felt like we had been friends for much longer. Indeed, it was his witty and eccentric personality which touched all the students he ever taught, and there are many. As I'm sure my classmates will appreciate, Mr Cook had a unique and rare ability to "unlock something indescribable that felt different, a sense of questioning things and thinking in a way most teachers couldn't do."

There was never any time to daydream or get distracted in his lessons, not least because his words came out quicker than his mouth could catch up, but also because his teaching was so captivating that you almost felt as though your mind had been transported to another realm of philosophy. Mr Cook had this one-of-a-kind gift, and students couldn't wait to have RS with him. He had this power to animate, and he has encouraged many, including myself, to continue studying philosophy post-18. Some have described him as the most enthusiastic and passionate teacher they have ever met, but he was more than this: he was a warm and energetic soul.

Those of you who have had the pleasure of knowing Mr Cook more deeply and for longer will, I'm sure, have countless memories to share. But even for the short time we, his students, knew him, Mr Cook left a distinct impression that will never go away. One of my first memories of my time at Bournemouth School was a Year 8 science lesson which Mr Cook was covering. Although it was the first time I met him, he exuberated an air of gentleness and humanity, before giving an unrelated monologue as to why religious studies was the best subject. Good luck getting away with that in a science classroom!

He also once made a Freudian slip and called his lessons "lectures," which was actually a rather apt description of his class, given that he perfected the Socratic method of questioning, rather than reading out of a textbook or off a board. Indeed, by the time Mr Cook had finished eloquently explaining a concept, he gave the

class a grand total of what felt like ten seconds to copy down the notes from the board. It didn't matter though, because the clarity and precision of his teaching was enough to make sure everyone understood what was going on, without the need of pre-prepared notes.

There have been many more hilarious memories of Mr Cook added to the website, often talking about chance encounters with him at the pub. One person noted an incident in which Mr Cook walked into the classroom and remarked: "Is it me or does it stink in here?" to which one of the students replied, "It only started smelling in here when you walked in, sir!" In typical Mr Cook fashion, he joined in on the joke and couldn't help but let out his distinctive laugh.

Everyone in the school community can attest that there was never a dull moment with Mr Cook, and his humorous character could cheer up anyone on a dry day. He spoke of philosophers as though he knew them personally and played us silly songs and videos. Who can forget his un-ironed shirt and oversized watch?

Outside of lessons too, Mr Cook was truly friendly and approachable. You could always talk to him, whether it be about the validity of transcendental idealism or about which chocolate biscuit is best. One student recalled that even when Mr Cook was busy, he never said no. It was clear to all that Mr Cook cared so deeply for each of his students and would go to great lengths to ensure their success, but above all, their wellbeing and happiness. It is this humility and service that we will remember him by, and I hope that, following his example, we emulate his compassion, patience and unmatched enthusiasm. No doubt Mr Cook would have wanted us all to respect one another, no matter what beliefs we hold, and to work together to create a more thoughtful and joyous world. It is this legacy that we are called to remember. Mr Cook, on behalf of the students of Bournemouth School, thank you.

Cookie has had an enduring impact upon all whose lives he has touched. He had a sharp mind, well-developed interpersonal skills and a great sense of humour. He made the world a kinder and better place simply by being in it. Bournemouth School and all of our lives will be a little emptier without him. His colleagues will use words to describe Richard such as "Integrity, humility, and compassion." Our students, past and present, would use just one word: "legend."



[www.bournemouth-school.org](http://www.bournemouth-school.org)

