

MEET THE HEAD

Former army officer Mark Mortimer took over as headmaster at Bryanston School last September

What would you have as your epitaph?

He got stuck in.

What did you want to be when you were young?

I have no recollection of wanting to be anything particular while I was at school. I wanted to play international rugby or cricket (no chance), but that was pretty vague. It was only when I was at university reading history that I decided to take a look at the army and from my very first visit I loved it and knew that was what I wanted to do. After university, I went to Sandhurst and then spent eight years as an infantry officer.

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm married to Anna (who's Parisian) and we have three young children (Amélie, Hugo and Clara). We're about to get a dog but tense negotiations about breed, size and name are ongoing. In terms of hobbies, I love sport, including running and cycling, I read a lot, play the ukulele and enjoy the ballet.

What are your favourite memories of school?

I loved school. I boarded throughout, played a lot of sport, and didn't work hard enough. However, my favourite memories – as they should be – are all about the friends that I made (several of whom remain my closest mates) and the relationships I had with them and with some



Above:
Bryanston School
in Dorset

of the wonderful teachers I had. Some of them are likewise still close friends. Schools are always more about people and relationships than about buildings and facilities.

What's the best bit about your job?

The people. As headmaster, I can quite legitimately spend an entire day wandering around talking to lots of different people. It's the great privilege of headship.

What advice would you give parents looking at prospective schools for their children?

Trust your instincts, as it's an emotional investment as well as a financial one. Don't be afraid to rely on the feeling you get as you walk around. All of our sector's schools are good, but you've got to choose the one that is the best fit for your child. What sort of person is your son or daughter? In what sort of environment are they most likely to thrive?

What do you believe is the most important stage or phase of education?

They're all important and all have a slightly different focus and purpose. I think it's important that, as educators, we are all clear on what attributes, skills or qualities we want the pupils to have developed by the end of each particular phase; the focus of a prep or primary school is different to that of a senior school, for example. Likewise, pastoral care is every bit as important in the Sixth Form as it is for young children.

Do you eat school dinners?

Absolutely. The food at Bryanston is as good, if not better, than any school in the land and, additionally, the dining hall is the heart of a school, where we all gather on a daily basis and where I have the opportunity to catch up informally with pupils and get a sense of the morale and temperature of the school community.

Do you still have your old school reports?

Yes, I do – a few of them make for painful reading. They're a lot blunter than modern reports! ■

Below:
Mark Mortimer
runs, cycles and
plays the ukulele

