

Dear Parents and Carers,

Brooke Leavey

A beautiful, spirited starburst of an 11 year old girl died in her home on Saturday afternoon surrounded by a loving family and devoted friends. The cruellest of brain tumours, first diagnosed almost a year ago, finally overcoming the bravest of fights from one of childhoods' punchiest characters. The thoughts and prayers of an entire school community are sent with all the love possible to the amazing people who were the centre of Brooke Leavey's world. We hope you remain as strong and resolute for each other in the coming days and weeks; and know that we will support you and comfort you in whatever ways we can.

In life, Brooke was already a bit of a legend. To hear her sing was to experience soulful emotion, power and talent; she graced many Berrywood shows with huge solo performances that belied her modest stature. Brooke could act and dance too. Often the socialite buzzing amongst her many and varied friendship groups, she toiled so hard academically with characteristic determination against demanding National Curriculum expectations. A unique bubble of energy and delight until her dying day.

I would like to pay tribute to the courage and fortitude of Dan and Lisa. Most of us can't even begin to imagine the horror of losing your child. Their determination and resilience throughout Brooke's dreadful illness epitomised in the uplifting community message posted so soon after her final moments. Our pledge is to continue to offer whatever we can in condolence, care and comfort in the coming days and, of course, beyond. We will hold Amelia and Phoebe close during their bereavement. You have shown a whole lot of people the meaning of community, a gift we shall endeavour to repay.

Please allow me to give just a little flavour of what it was like having Brooke around in school. Brooke was not shy in sharing her opinions which were often delivered...with a certain panache! I recall a 'restorative conversation' held when she was in Year 4 between Brooke and *one* of the *interesting* boys in her cohort.

"What did you say to him Brooke?" I asked.

"I called him an idiot. He is a *total* idiot," she then displayed the most innocent angelic face imaginable, looked me in the eye and added, "I'm really sorry Mr. Reilly, I won't do it again." To which of course, as was often the case, I had very little reply.

Whatever the pandemic crisis throws our way over the coming weeks, in due course, a fitting and enduring memorial in celebration of the lovely life of Brooke will be created here at Berrywood. In the meantime, let us all take comfort in our magical memories of Brooke Leavey.

With very best wishes,



Chris Reilly

