

Memories of Keven Johnstone



A long serving member of Uppingham staff for more than 20 years, Keven passed away peacefully in November 2024. He touched a great many lives throughout our community – as Director of Sport, Housemaster of Lorne House, Director of Activities and Head of Golf, as well as through his roles in Samworths' and in The Lodge.

Oliver Mayes (LH 05)

I joined Lorne House in 2005 and will always remember Mr Johnstone and his family for welcoming me and my peers to the School and the House and making us feel at home very quickly. Looking back now it does seem strange to think I arrived there aged 'only' 13 but it did not seem like a big thing at the time and I guess that can only be testament to him.

He was a great man and was incredibly supportive of me throughout the first few years at the school before he left Lorne House after my second year and then beyond whenever I bumped into him around the school/town. I will be forever grateful for his patience and care.

A note from former parents

Our son was / is a keen golfer and as a tutor at West Bank, Mr Johnstone took him under his wing and nurtured his love for golf which he still has today. He left Uppingham seven years ago, he occasionally plays at Luffenham and remembers Mr Johnstone fondly...I'm sure even more the next time he plays there. We will be forever grateful for sharing his passion and commitment to our boys.

Clementine Manning (Sa 16)

Mr J will be fondly remembered by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. I will always remember the way he would stand in the garden whilst we were collecting the eggs for the Easter egg hunt and give hints and tips, and seeing him on the middle during sport, especially cricket. He was also a barbecuing whizz, and could make every Sunday in summer the best lunch ever. He was a truly kind soul, and he will be sorely missed.

Rory Dixon (WB 12)

Keven was an huge part of my journey at Uppingham – an unwavering mentor and a source of guidance and strength. As I reflect on my time there, I realise he was not just a mentor but, by the time it came to leaving school, someone I had come to consider a friend. My thoughts are with everyone who was touched by Keven's kindness - what an amazing man.

Maya Diklich (L 19)

Keven would always give great advice and had wise words of wisdom. I remember meeting him the first time visiting Uppingham in June 2022 and him being the kindest man. He inspired so many of us and brought out so much house spirit. He was an integral part of the Lodge and Uppingham School and he was brilliantly bright and inspiring.

Tom Moxon (WB 06)

'Kev John', as he was endearingly known during my time as a pupil at the School, was my tutor in West Bank, my PE teacher, sports coach and more generally, a wonderful person to share stories and ideas (normally sports related!). Generally, my group of peers at WB would sit in the common room or dining room with him chatting about anything and everything on the evenings he was on duty. He left a real mark on me during my time at Uppingham and I wish I could thank him again for everything he did for me.

Rowan Northcott (B 05)

I will always remember Keven as a very kind man, who I credit with supercharging my love of golf. Our golf team was amateur at best before Keven got involved, and within one season we had a full fixture list, Mizuno branded kit, lessons each week, and in our second season, a trip to the Nationals secured.

His kindness was only matched by his golf game. Keven would make endlessly consistent pars and birdies all over Luffenham Heath, as us unwise youngsters attempted to bludgeon the course to death with lashing swings with the driver. The high rough and firm conditions would yield lost balls and double bogeys, whereas Mr. Johnstone, often with a trademark wink, would roll in another putt after hitting the green in regulation.

I encountered Keven frequently in my house, Brooklands, where he would always chat about and encourage our sporting activity and offer counsel in his dulcet Scottish tones whenever needed. The world, and the fairways, will be a less warm place without him.

Lulu Leetham (J 19)

As Mr J's last captain of golf I am grateful for his support and guidance – I really don't think I would have made it to America playing golf without him. Mr J was the kindest and most helpful teacher, always there to listen (even to my ridiculous gossip), to drive us around, to coach and simply just be there – I now know how important this simple act is. He genuinely has a great legacy for Uppinghamians past but also for Uppinghamians of the future.

Jonathan Palfreyman (LH 64)

Keven played such an important part in our lives during Uppingham years, and thanks to his continued support of Amantani, we were regularly in contact. The fact that Chris is now one of the country's leading Triathlon Coaches is undoubtedly due to the inspirational teaching received from Keven at GCSE and A level, which led Chris to read Sports Coaching at Oxford Brookes. After over 10 years successfully fundraising at Amantani he's now doing the job of his dreams, so here's to Keven's memory! I always enjoyed seeing Keven at the OU golfing events I attended, and I never saw anyone drive a ball further than him of the 18th hole at Luffenham. He'll be sadly missed.

Jeff Melville, Ex-Knox Academy (High School) Friend

I first bumped into Keven in primary 5 I think and we became chums. We later played in the school first XV together and at representative level and also for the very first basketball team for Knox Academy. We also played in the annual cricket match between teachers and pupils and of course, we were never going to lose that one. Keven was a great competitor and a great leader. I loved being in his company as others did.

He was also a great football player with a great left foot, which also worked for us at rugby, probably our top points scorer for 2 seasons playing at full back. Mr "Composure under pressure" always!

We had many tussles at athletics but when it came to the high jump and long jump, he was at another level to the rest of us. I remember watching him do the Fosbury Flop and like the rest of us queuing up for our turn thinking "where the heck did he learn that" But with natural talent in abundance, he didn't need to be taught.

Looking at old school photos, primary school and high school, I'm drawn to Keven's smile, kind of how I remember him - a real positive light.

It looks like Keven carved out a very impressive career in sport and was incredibly well respected and highly regarded by so many. That comes as no surprise to me. I'm 61 now, we've all led different lives and careers since high school, but you always remember the really good guys, the ones that stood out.

Emily Worthington

Keven was an utterly charming, warm and funny man who I feel very lucky to have known. He was always very kind; he listened intently and cared a great deal about others. He was very funny and had so many hilarious stories. I will always remember him for making me smile and laugh and for his warmth.

Ashley Qin (L 22)

Mr J was always there for a chat, to check in with us and genuinely cared about each of us. My favourite memory of him is that he's always on a walk back with Cassie and he'll tell us to run for Chapel or we wouldn't make it. His warmth and kindness will not be forgotten.

Henry Ash (B 07)

I was such a huge fan of Keven's, from when he was my tutor in Brooklands, supporting me through my love of sport, but also a dedicated and driven individual. It was clear that he wanted the best for everyone, and he would push for anyone to succeed, if they wanted to.

It would be wrong of me not to mention his golf. Clearly his passion and was very good at it. The last time I saw him was playing golf at Luffenham Heath in the old pupils' day against the school. I played the round with him, and we had great chats. He was so interested to hear about what I was up to and in what direction my life had gone in.

I have always maintained that Uppingham produced very well-rounded people. Those people are made, in part, by the teachers and staff at the school, keeping us grounded but also pushing us to thrive. I owe so much to the school and the teachers that taught me there, Kev J (as we, naughtily used to call him!) being an integral part of that.

Social Media Comments

Keven has been the most wonderful, warm and welcoming cornerstone of Uppingham School for two decades. He had such a passion to inspire and if necessary, find alternative routes for all the pupils to succeed in their chosen sport which hopefully many past pupils will now reflect and appreciate. Keven always had such an infectious cheerful demeanour and was driven more recently to deliver a Golf Simulator Suite for the School. He worked tirelessly to achieve the funding, to secure the correct space and to inspire the next generation of Uppinghamians with a state-of-the-art facility.

I was lucky enough to spend time with Keven on a few occasions. He was a very genuine man who was always willing to help young aspiring Golfers.

He was always so fit, and so unrelentingly cheerful. I have warm memories of his athletics warmups and of the annual pre-season trip to Durham. A fantastic schoolmaster.

Such a shock and a lovely gentleman. Had some great years as a tutor in Lorne house with him.

Keven was inspirational. As a young professional, I took over from him as Dir of Sport and he was always unfaltering in his support, but also humble, sensible, funny and an awesome badminton player. I looked up to him a great deal and hope he knew how grateful I was for his support and friendship.

An incredible man that motivated and inspired so many of us.
