

Graduates' Testimonies

Charlotte Hakes

I came to The Branch Christian School in 2006 when I was eleven years old, having attended primary school and –very briefly– a different A.C.E school in Leeds, which closed down. In 2012, I left The Branch and now (2013) I'm studying A levels at Greenhead College, Huddersfield, hoping to continue on to university to study English.

Initially I didn't take well to the change in schools, because at the time a lot of familiar things such as my home and my friends were changing places with unfamiliar, new things. Now I firmly feel more grateful than I could convey in words for the time I spent there. I wouldn't have had it any other way if I could, despite the countless amount of times I find myself having to explain the system to people!

Academically, I went from being motivationless to significantly more driven and desirous to work hard. Many people seem to get jittery about the fact that The Branch doesn't issue GCSEs, and while I'm certainly not in any position to attempt to make any contrast or comparison between the different qualifications, I can positively state that having a less heard of qualification [General Level, ICCE] rather than GCSEs wasn't any hindrance in applying to sixth forms.

Spiritually, The Branch challenged and inspired me all the time and I think it's safe to say I'm not the only one who would say this.

Character-building is something you hear mentioned all the time at The Branch, incorporated into the teaching. You also see it in action there, because I think you experience it through the general atmosphere and the Godly examples you are surrounded by. Personally, I feel this helped me come a very long way, however far I know I still have to progress. These things have helped me settle into a new environment of 2000+ students at college, staying positive and thankful in an environment change that naturally conflicts in more than one way with someone who prefers to avoid crowds and unfamiliar social situations as much as I do.

In addition, The Branch sets its students up with a good balance of independence and concern for the good of others. They are encouraged to learn individually according to their own abilities, and achievements are rarely overlooked. Alongside this, everyone is part of group activities such as Devotions and extra-curricular lessons and Christ-like selflessness is constantly encouraged.

I'm conscious as I write this that I might not have moved far beyond school at this moment in time, but I've a strong sense that I'll become increasingly more grateful as time goes on for the all ways God enriched me through The Branch. I hope people's lives continue to be impacted profoundly and prepared for the future through the school, and I hope above all that it continues to bring people closer and closer to God.

Abigail Jessop (nee. Hodgson)

I enjoyed my time in the Branch Christian School, seeing God work, through so many different ways, and seeing His blessings on the school was amazing just by itself.

I loved being one of the first students of the school, because it felt like I was part of a big family that just grew and grew.

The Branch Christian School helped me in so many different ways and I am very proud to have been a part of the school.

Barnabas Childs

I was one of the first eight students to attend the Branch Christian School. It is a great school, I had to work really hard, but I enjoyed my time at the school and it was a really loving environment to work in! I struggled with the work at times, but the teachers were a great help, and I'm sure my time at the school has really helped me for my working life.

After I left school, I went to work at a building company and while I was there I trained to be a bricklayer at college. After 5 years, I decided that I wanted a change of career, and I went to Huddersfield University to study media and sports journalism. I now work at a Christian radio station in Dewsbury called [Branch FM!](#)

You will definitely have to work hard at the Branch Christian School, but I'm sure you will really enjoy your time at the school, and it will give you the skills you need for your future!

Philip McKenning

I was very unhappy at the secondary school. I was being bullied and as a consequence I wasn't fulfilling my academic potential. It looked like I would only come out with only two passes in my GCSE's!

It was then, my parents and I looked into the Branch Christian School and because of the wonderful atmosphere, which I must put down to the school's focus on glorifying God and also the 'working at your own pace' scheme, I achieved all A's in my level 1 Certificate (GCSE Equivalents) and went on to Music college and then to do a degree in Music at York St John University.

None of this would have happened if I hadn't gone to the Branch Christian School!

Abigail Porter (nee. Holt)

The Branch Christian School has many excellent merits, just one of which being the individualised learning system that they use. Students from all backgrounds and of all abilities are catered for and allowed to flourish in their own right, unhindered by other students or classes.

I started at the Branch when I was 6, in 1994 and graduated in 2005 with the equivalent of 4 'A' Levels. I went onto University to study photography, and now run my own professional photography business.

I consider my time at the Branch an integral and influential part of my life that has helped to shape me into the well rounded individual that I am today.

Staff at the Branch genuinely care about their students and spend a huge amount of time aiding students in discovering their potential.

I would highly recommend this school and this learning system to anyone who asked.

If you want your child to have a caring, nurturing environment in which to learn and you value character building, then the Branch Christian School is the place for you.

The Branch Christian School is the best thing that could have happened to me. As well as being brought up in a loving Christian home, the Branch gave me an opportunity to receive a good quality education combined with solid Christian foundations. One of my favourite aspects of ACE was learning the character traits - I find that this is one thing, which even now, I consciously try and go through and keep close to my heart.

Bethany Holt

School helped me to develop such a love for and a relationship with God that I feel may not have been possible had I been in secular education. This is because, after going to both college and university, I see the many distractions that are around and if it hadn't been for those first 13 years of my life at the Branch, I would have been exposed too soon and may not have known how to deal with them.

I'm so grateful to God for placing the desire to start a Christian school on the hearts of Pastor and Mrs Ward and also to them responding to that call and doing such a fantastic job. All the teachers at the Branch were fantastic, and each in their own way contributed to some part of my education and growing up! Given the chance to do it all over again, I wouldn't think twice about going to the Branch.

David Holt

I left The Branch Christian School in 2010 to go to HGS (Heckmondwike Grammar School). But it is only at this point that I fully began to appreciate the education I had already.

From the 'outside' it certainly seems like a peculiar education system but having now studied at HGS and now Oxford I often find myself trying to explain the system my peers. And the best way I have found to explain it, is to say that it is a large family, where you will feel loved and given room to develop in a variety of ways.

At The Branch Christian School I learnt the skills that call I upon daily in my studies at Oxford University (reading Engineering Science MEng 2012-current).

My time at the Branch was a vital part in my academic development. I do not think I would be in my current position if it was not for the things I learnt at the Branch and the people who helped me learn them. This school is a place that I fondly look back on, and am glad that my parents gave me the opportunity to attend.

One thing I loved about my time at the Branch was the ability to work at my own pace. It gave me freedom to quickly progress though topics that I found easy and spend the necessary time on the subjects that I needed more work on. But due to the consistently wide curriculum that is required at each level, I also learnt how to knuckle down and work through it.

My time at school was a key part in my spiritual development. Knowing what I know now, if I was able to go back, I would be more involved in the devotional times we had studying the Bible. This is not to

say I regret any of my time spent at the Branch, as I know how it has shaped me into who I am today, but only desire now to make the most of the opportunities I have.

The staff at the Branch are so supportive and always have your best interests at heart.

Like most of things in life, the education of the Branch gives back as much as you put into it. And it gave me so much that I am thankful of, academic, personal and spiritual.

Anna Holt

Just the other day, I was discussing with a friend how amazing it was that Pastor and Mrs Ward dared to follow God's direction, to dream big and to never give up on that vision to grow a school which nurtured children academically, but more importantly, spiritually. I was blessed to progress through both my primary and secondary education within The Branch Christian School (1994 – 2007).

Upon leaving school, I worked as a sales assistant in two stores and also taught at Locksley Christian School in Lincolnshire for two terms before realising I wanted to become a teacher.

Whilst been interviewed for degree courses in Primary Education, I was asked why I wanted to become a primary school teacher in a state school if my own education system was 'so good.' At the time, I answered as honestly as I could that I felt that the skills and character I had developed at the Branch would enable me to go into both university and the workplace as a conscientious, dedicated candidate. I attended York St John University for three years and loved every minute of it.

Little did I realise that my education really would have such a positive impact upon my life. As I am about to enter my second year of teaching in a wonderful state primary school, I am forever grateful for the strong foundations laid by the Biblical teachings both of the curriculum and the staff who delivered it. In my classroom, we discuss sowing seeds of forgiveness, love and kindness. Seeds need time to grow and develop. Patience. Faith. Perhaps it sounds airy fairy but in a world riddled with doubt, hurt and bitterness, I am blessed to be able to share just a little of the foundations I was taught to discover on a daily basis within the Branch. My only regret is that I can't send all my children to The Branch and teach them openly about Jesus.

I love my job and know I am in the right place as I believe Christians are needed in all workplaces but when I have children, I won't hesitate to send them to the Branch. Yes, it may cost but I have come to know that the blessings will far outweigh the cost. Thank you Mum and Dad for allowing me and my siblings to attend the Branch.

Sgt. Kay Ward (nee. Hodgson)

I attended The Branch Christian School from its opening in 1994 until 2001. I graduated with the National Christian Schools Certificate Level 2. I was attested into the Royal Air Force on 30 October 2002 and completed initial training at the Recruit Training Squadron RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire. I was then posted to Royal Hospital Haslar and Fort Blockhouse in Gosport Hampshire to undertake student nurse training. I graduated from the University of Portsmouth in January 2006 with a Diploma of Higher Education Registered Nurse Adult and received the Commandants Prize for best student on the Defence Nursing Course.

Upon nurse graduation I was promoted to the rank of Corporal and posted to the Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit Peterborough. I completed a nurse rotation working on Medical Admissions, Orthopaedics and Surgery before becoming a permanent member of staff on the Surgical Assessment Unit. I deployed to Kandahar Afghanistan and conducted Aeromedical Evacuation duties as a Flight Nurse repatriating injured Service personnel, coalition forces, local nationals and enemy forces. During this posting I was informed I had won the Corner Cup for the most outstanding non-commissioned nurse within the RAF. Upon return to Unit I was selected from the whole nursing Corporal cadre to hold acting rank of Sergeant and become the Senior Military Nurse on the trauma orthopaedic ward. During this post I deployed with 1-week notice to Afghanistan to conduct Aeromedical Evacuation duties.

I came 1st of the promotion board and gained Substantive Sergeant rank and transferred to work in the Military Practice Development Team performing line management responsibilities for all newly qualified nurses posted in to the hospital Unit. My 3rd deployment was to Camp Bastion Afghanistan as the Deputy Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Officer.

In October 2012 I was posted to RAF Brize Norton as Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Flight Nurse working in the Aeromedical Evacuation Control Centre, my current post. I am responsible for the co-ordination of worldwide Aeromedical Evacuation of Service personnel, dependents and entitled civilians. I am currently completing a BSc(Hons) Nursing Practice Leadership degree which I am on schedule to complete in late 2013.

The Branch Christian School instilled in me the discipline required to conduct and perform well throughout the challenges Service life presents.

James Pollard

It was good to attend James' leaving presentation on July 18th, 2016. It hardly seemed like seven years since he was welcomed in the newsletter dated November 2009!

His life at his previous school had become impossible. Because of his mild cerebral palsy, he was far behind educationally, and although he received limited additional support, it was insufficient to enable the teachers to attain their Ofsted aspirations. Also, the school seemed unable (or unwilling) to prevent verbal and physical abuse from other pupils.

At the Branch, all new students have an individual educational assessment, providing a learning plan tailored to their individual needs. Areas of particular weakness are addressed and the student does not move on to more advanced work until everyone is satisfied that the basics are understood.

James made considerable progress working at his own speed during the first year, and was even awarded the school cup for the student who made the most progress!

Although students work in groups for some activities, they have their own work stations (offices). Unlike a classroom situation, supervisors are always available to provide individual support when needed.

High achievers aiming for a place at a top university may have their office next to someone at the lower end of the educational scale – all working at their own pace.

Far from there being any bullying, the school fosters a spirit of caring and support for those who are weaker, so that close friendships are often formed between students across the age and academic spectrum,

Parents always have ready access to staff members when they have concerns.

Although James is now going to college, I'm sure we will all maintain contact with the school and James will maintain the friendships he has formed over the years.

Thank you for your all your friendship and support.

-Joe and Sally Pollard.