**Letter from Father Neil Roberts Summer Term 2016**

*Excerpt from ‘Ashurst Parish Newsletter - Summer 2016’.*

In February 2014 when we moved into the Vicarage, Louis was three and had a place at Saint Andrew’s pre-school in a town we knew little about and Benedict was only just over nine week old as we unpacked. When I look at our two boys now, I can see how much time has passed in all too short a period of time! Benedict is now at the same pre-school and Louis is settled in our most dearly beloved Primary School and thriving in their care. I have written before about how proud I am of my Church School in Ashurst and I make no apology for saying it again! What a real nest of virtue there is in the centre of our village serving those form near and far who can see and feel something of the Kingdom of God breaking into our temporal world – where humility, endeavour, kindness and honesty are rewarded and where those who find themselves battered by the world find support and love. What a real satellite for God’s will on earth as it is in heaven. This does not happen by accident – though from a parental viewpoint one could be forgiven for believing that it does for it is such a seamless and unobtrusive Christian witness that is neither contrived nor superimposed, but lived out in Christian virtues that are inhabited rather than merely ‘adopted’ for the sake of an inspection. I have jested with Mrs Williams before that I sometimes draw a parallel with the prayer life of the school and with Alton Abbey, my own Benedictine House – which is a pleasing parallel since we Benedictines refer to our monasteries as ‘schools of prayer’.

I have been deeply moved by so many of you, and especially the parents of the children in our school, who have remarked on the impact that I have made in being ‘around’ in the Fountain, on the Recreation ground, at school in Collective Worship, in the Family Services (perhaps most especially for Mothering Sunday, Rogation Sunday and Christingel for which the schools are key players) and being at the school gate simply being available – thank you for that, though, I confess that I do not see things that way since I have done nothing more than been myself as a Daddy and Governor and allowed that to inform how to be your Rector.