As the school year comes to a close, so does the tenure of Ms. Northey as BISB’s Deputy Head of School. Ms. Northey has been at BISB for the past 19 years, which makes her the second-longest serving member of staff. Before BISB, she pursued higher education in the UK. Over the course of 8 years of higher education, she achieved a degree in Education, a degree in Psychology, and a Master's in Education, and Educational Leadership. She then came to America, where she joined BISB. Before becoming the Deputy Head of School, she taught Reception and Year 1 for three years. We sat down with her to give her an opportunity to reflect on her time here at BISB.

**How much has the school changed since you first arrived?**

When I first joined, the school was housed in an old Catholic school building in Dedham. We then moved into the wings at Showa, whilst the current building was being built. The school was very Lower School heavy at that time, and we had a very small Middle School presence. It was interesting, because at that time, the British School of Boston, (as we were named then,) was well known in the school community for being one of the top ‘feeder’ schools in Boston, which was frustrating for us, as we knew we could easily be a good match for the top Middle and High schools too. The word was able to spread that the Middle and High schools were strong and competitive. This allowed the school to significantly grow over the years. We now have a thriving all-through school, where the academic rigor is strong throughout, from Toddlers to Year 13.

**What was your favorite thing you accomplished during your time here at BISB?**

I think the thing I have loved most about my time at BISB, is the building of connections and relationships. BISB is a small school and I love being able to get to know each and every student well and watching them blossom in their time at BISB. Parents often ask me, when I am standing at the gate to welcome the Lower School children every morning, or to say goodbye at the end of each day, how I know the names of every child. The answer is simple really when you love your job and you love children, you pretty soon get to understand what makes each child tick. Each year at Graduation, I find myself bursting with pride as children I have known since their Early Years, are graduating from our school, as young adults, and ready to take on the world. Whilst, that is not necessarily my accomplishment, I know that I have been a part of, and hopefully made some small difference to, each child’s journey, and that makes me happy.

**What’s the most memorable moment in your career?**

There have been too many memorable moments in my career to list them all, but there are some funny ones and some moving ones that spring to mind. One funny one was when I was a teacher in Reception when we were in the wings of Showa. I, for some reason, had two classrooms, one on either side of the corridor. I also had an enormous lop-eared rabbit called Mojo, which many of the children will remember. He used to lollop around in the classroom. (Health and Safety would never allow that now, but in those days, he was able to.) One day, Mojo escaped from my classroom and started running down the corridor. We could not catch him as he kept darting into classrooms. He ran into the Nursery classroom and suddenly I hear a little boy screaming, “Come quickly, there is a huge sheep in our classroom!” We were all laughing so much, he really was so big (and so naughty!)

Another memorable time in my career was when I was asked to speak at a local seminar about Education. It became very clear, very quickly, that what I was talking about, which was basically our own school’s philosophy, and what BISB lives and breathes, was so much more than most schools offer. It was so exciting to hear and see people’s reactions to what I thought was the norm, but now know is something quite extraordinary. To this day, it makes me excited to reflect and talk about our BISB values and what we consider to be a good, well-rounded, education.

**With the pandemic this year, many things were canceled. What's the thing you missed the most?**

Honestly, I had no idea when the year started that it would pan out the way it did. All of the protocols and restrictions that we were required to put in place seemed insurmountable, but nothing is impossible if you really want it. We really wanted the students to be in-person and have the opportunity to continue in school, with as much normalcy as was possible.

When I think back, there are things that I valued about the time during the pandemic, things I have learned, and things that I missed.

I valued the time I got to spend with my husband and daughter; I valued a newly found appreciation of the collective understanding of a whole world coming together to protect the more vulnerable; I valued the power of technology which allowed us to continue to connect with my family in the UK; and also the same technology that could keep classes going remotely for the students.

I also learned a huge amount through the pandemic. I learned more than I ever thought possible about the science behind a global pandemic and the need for strict protocols; I learned new things about technology; I learned patience and resilience that I didn’t think I possessed; I learned what an important part Mental Health played in all of our lives, and how Mental Health must be prioritized going forward, before anything else will fall into place.

There were stark losses too. I missed being able to travel to the UK to see my family; I missed the connections my daughter wasn’t able to have with her friends, as her school was remote or hybrid much of the year; I missed the sports that weren’t able to take place; I also really missed being able to go into classrooms to teach. Finally, I missed seeing the children's faces, being able to read expressions and gauge how children are feeling is a huge part of teaching.

**What hopes do you have going forward for the school?**

I hope that the philosophy of BISB, the DNA of who we are as a school remains. I hope that education, worldwide, will see the upcoming few years as a chance to stop and reflect. There is no excuse for schools to do things in the same old way. This is a time to take the positives from the past 18 months and reframe them, as we move forward. This is a time to learn from the not-so-positive take-aways from the pandemic. This is the time to make Mental Health the basis of all we build upon. This is time for Education and the world to reset and reprioritize.

**What advice do you have for the students going forward?**

I think my advice to students going forward is similar to my hopes above. Use this time wisely. Reflect, rest and reprioritize things in your life. Focus on the important things and don’t sweat on the things that are not important. Most importantly be you and be proud of who you are.

**What is a message you would like me to broadcast to the school?**

I am sure so many of you will remember my motto – make mistakes, be honest and own your mistakes, and learn from those mistakes, so you don’t keep making the same mistakes. My message to you all is to go out there and be the best you can be. You are all amazing!

Both BISB and everyone within it, students, staff, and parents will all always have a very special place in my heart.

We thank Ms. Northey for providing all of this tremendous insight. We appreciate all of the hard work she has put in for the school throughout the last 19 years and wish her the best of luck moving forward.