



### **Matt Neale - Ferndown Upper School Leaver - 2014**

When I left Ferndown Upper School in 2014 I went on to start my scholarship at AFC Bournemouth. Having been part of the AFC Bournemouth academy since I was 9 years old, I was always keen to pursue my goal of becoming a professional footballer. This was something the school were very supportive of, allowing me to attend training during school time but also providing me with catch up lessons to ensure I also fulfilled my academic potential. In 2016 I achieved my goal of signing my professional contract and this is my proudest moment to date. Throughout my time at AFC Bournemouth, I also got involved within the local community, going into schools to talk about my experience and also coaching the younger generation. Unfortunately, in 2017 I was released from AFC Bournemouth unsure of what the future would hold.

After working full time for a year and playing non-league football I decided to go to university where I studied Sports Performance Analysis at Cardiff Metropolitan University. My 3 years at university helped me mature as a young adult and put me outside my comfort zone. The combination of educational, social and entrepreneurial experiences I had helped shape me into the person I am today.

Over the 3 years I was at Ferndown Upper School (2011-2014) I was always keen to get involved in sport. Whether that was helping out on sports day or representing the school in football or any other sport. My name was first on the list!

Following my graduation in 2022 I have now set up my own football coaching business to help improve the next generation of footballing talent. This is something I am extremely passionate about. Alongside this, I also work for a specialised performance analysis company working with professional football clubs and also at the world's first football gym. Of course, I still play football too!

I feel like my time at Ferndown Upper School installed a hard-working mentality in me. I would have to miss some lessons due to my football commitments. However, the teachers and staff were very supportive and ensured that I went above and beyond to catch up after school. This has stayed with me as during both university and now working life I still have that hard-working mentality.

Finally, my piece of advice for current students at Ferndown Upper School would be to try something new and get out of your comfort zone. I remember when I was younger, I always wanted to do things that I felt comfortable doing, but soon as you go outside of that, you never know what opportunities might come from it. Good luck current students!