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ULVERSTON VICTORIA HIGH SCHOOL

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I applied for this internship on the basis that teaching was a potential career path that I may want to take. After being accepted, I was very keen to get started and experience what it is like to be on the other side of the desk. I was placed in the school that I attended for my secondary education which was a blessing, being so close to home and being familiar with the school and the staff. But also a curse as it is such a good school, it hasn't given me the experience of working in more difficult situations.

#### In the beginning...

We started off the first week with a staff briefing where all the teachers gathered to listen to notices for that week. My fellow intern and I were introduced to the staff body and we were warmly welcomed. Following the briefing, we attended a health and safety induction – this gave us an idea of what to do in different circumstances from a fire to coming across an unidentified adult in the grounds. We were also given information on where to find other health and safety information such as policies and recommendations provided by the council.

We were then given our timetables. The classes scheduled for us were children ranging from Year 7s to Year 12s which gave us a full range of ages and abilities. We were also given a form to be present with every registration to get an idea of the variety of relationships a teacher can have with students.

|               | Monday         | Tuesday      | Wednesday            | Thursday             | Friday         |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Before school | Staff Briefing |              | Year Team Meeting    | Staff Briefing       |                |
| Registration  | Year 10: A23   | Year 10: A23 | Year 10: A23         | Year 10: A23         | Year 10: A23   |
| Period 1      | Year 10: A22   |              | Year 9: A22          | Year 12: A22         |                |
| Period 2      | Year 10: A22   |              | Year 9: A22          | Year 12: A22         | (Maths)        |
| Break         |                |              |                      |                      |                |
| Period 3      |                | Year 12: A22 |                      | Year 12: A22         | Year 10: A19   |
| Period 4      |                | Year 12: A22 |                      | Year 12: A22         | Meet with Mr T |
| Lunch         |                |              |                      |                      |                |
| Registration  | Year 10: A23   | Year 10: A23 | Year 10: A23         | Year 10: A23         | Year 10: A23   |
| Period 5      | Year 9: A22    | Year 7: A23  | Year 9: A23          | Year 9: A23          |                |
| Period 6      | Year 9: A22    | Year 7: A23  | Year 9: A23 (/Maths) | Year 9: A23 (/Maths) |                |

In the afternoon, we had a meeting about safeguarding with the school's safeguarding leader Mrs Hewson, during which my initial thoughts of the role of a teacher were shifted. Being from a pleasant family in a small quiet town, I always assumed the main job of a teacher was to teach, but after learning about a few harrowing tragedies in other schools we soon found out that there is so much more to it than that.

For the remainder of the afternoon I was present in a Year 9 class and learned about the importance of seating plans. From catering for those with special needs to carefully seating potentially disruptive students, a lot of thought is put in to seating the children in particular places. Another helpful aspect of the seating plan is to quickly remember names, which I was informed helps with effectiveness when it comes to discipline.

The rest of the first week unfolded like so:

## **20<sup>th</sup> June**

### *Year 10*

We managed to get a little more involved in a Year 10 class who were revising for exams so we were able to answer questions and help them if they were stuck. The layout of the lesson was very relaxed and the students were encouraged to work in their own time on questions they were given after the teacher had gone through that day's topics on the board with the use of a mind map. This made it clear what the students needed to know for the test and broke the topics down into manageable sizes.

This style of teaching showed that there is a certain level of trust between the teacher and their students.

### *Year 7*

During the afternoon, I was scheduled to help in a Year 7 class. This class had a test that day and so during the first 20 minutes I helped them revise and answered any questions they had. However, my assistance was not required during test time so I took the opportunity to reflect with a cup of tea before the end of the day!

It was nice to see the contrast between the two age groups. The quiet Year 10s who (mostly) got on with their work versus the energetic Year 7s who were somewhat less engaged. It really showed how versatile a teacher needs to be to find techniques that are suitable for all age groups.

## **21<sup>st</sup> June**

### *Year team meeting*

Mrs Gardiner, who I shadowed during form time, took me to attend the weekly meeting where they discuss the behaviour of pupils in their Year and pass on notices relevant to that Year group. I think communication between teachers is extremely important and these meetings provide clear instructions and allow form tutors to pass on messages to their students from the senior team quickly and efficiently.

### *Year 9*

During the morning was a double period with Year 9s. They were working on density, mainly looking at density calculations. There is a wide range of ability in the class which makes the pace of the lesson

difficult to gauge. It needs to be slow enough for the less able to keep up and understand, but not too slow such that more able students feel bored and start misbehaving. This was well managed as there were plenty of extra question sheets for the more able pupils and so they were never without work, this gave plenty of time for the less able to catch up with the main body of work. I played a more involved role in this lesson as I could go around the students and help with any issues with the maths. One thing I found difficult though was trying to explain simple mathematical concepts such as rearranging equations, something that is second nature to me but not for children of that age.

Another thing that struck me as difficult was that the questions the students were asking sometimes needed them to have a higher knowledge for them to understand the answer.

### *Year 9 biology*

Being a science teacher in a secondary school means you may not always be able to teach your specialist subject, so we were timetabled to spend some time helping in a Year 9 biology class. These specific Year 9s had a wide range of capabilities and so some found it hard to stay focussed. Their topic was enzymes, so to help I had to think back to the last time I did biology which was GCSE four Years ago. It was clear to see that if you were to set them work, they would struggle to stay on task, so Mrs Gardiner told us a small amount of 'banter' was needed to get them engaged with the subject.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> June**

#### *Staff briefing*

Before the day got underway, we attended the second staff briefing of the week following the students' prize giving the previous evening. Praises were given by the head teacher Mr Fay and again notices were given out to teachers.

#### *Year 12 #1*

Capacitors were on the menu today for Year 12, a topic I feel very comfortable with after doing electronics this last Year at university. A more university teaching style was used, Mr Thompson made use of a PowerPoint and gave the bulk of the information in that way while taking questions and answers from the students. For the second half of the lesson a demonstration using two large sheets of foil separated by a large plastic sheet gave the entertainment for the lesson and, with 10 minutes to spare, the students could have a play with capacitors in circuits.

#### *Year 12 #2*

The next class of Year 12s had the exact same lesson, however after break they also had a double period with Mr Thompson as well. During the double period they explored the mathematics of  $Q=CV$  which included looking at a question from this Year's exam paper to show its relevance. This didn't take them a huge amount of time as they are mostly good mathematicians so they quickly moved on to their experiment which involved investigating capacitor discharge.

It was nice to see the use of log books during the experiment. This prepares the students for university style labs where the upkeep of a laboratory book is important. There is also a lot of emphasis on errors and uncertainties which is a good change as I recall struggling with such things when beginning university labs.

### *Year 9 biology*

With the same class as the previous day, we knew what to expect. We got a lot more involved as the students were given activities to work on in groups and independently. I found it very difficult not to get too distracted by the students. For example, there was a group of girls who would ask about my life/hobbies/likes/dislikes and trying to find the balance between having that friendly relationship but also keeping them on task was hard.

It was also tough not to get drawn into one student. For example, there was a young boy who worked well and seemed engaged with the subject when I was sitting with him and he managed to finish the work set. However, when I left him to help someone else, he'd end up being distracting to other students and getting off task. This kept drawing me to him as I didn't want others to also get off task.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> June**

#### *Year 10*

During this single lesson, the Year 10s were revising ready for their mock exams. The pupils began with answering past exam questions about electrical circuits. They were then set a task on the life cycle of a star. They had to work together as a class to place the different stages in order, this allowed them to discuss ideas between themselves and help each other understand. I felt this task was very successful as everyone contributed and in the end, they got the stages in the correct order.

#### *Meeting*

Mr Thompson, my fellow intern and I had a meeting to discuss our first week and talk about any interesting observations. One that struck me was the vast array of abilities, not just over the Year groups; but even in one class that the teachers have to be able to cater for everyone's needs. Another thing I noticed was that teachers 'behind the scenes' are very different than they are in front of a class. One could say that every lesson is a performance in a kind of way. We got to spend some time with them in the office at lunch time and I found it quite interesting to see a more relaxed side of them and learn what they get up to in their (limited) free time.

### **Developments**

After the first week, I was excited to get back. We were told that we were to take a more active role throughout the following weeks which started with me taking the register for my form. This was quite nerve racking as there seems to be some special bond between a form tutor and their form and I felt like a bit of an intruder, however the form group was very welcoming and did not misbehave when I took more control.

The same level of involvement carried on through the lessons, I was answering more questions and (attempting to) explain key concepts to the students, especially in the younger classes. I began to get to know the children and found it very difficult not to get drawn into their chit-chat when they got off task. I

think this was because I wanted to give off a more relaxed vibe, particularly with Year 7s, but it's knowing when to draw the line and tell them to get back to work.

We had Caroline the technician show us her role one morning and Theresa the chemistry technician another morning. The amount of work the technicians have to do is unbelievable. Not only the amount, but the breadth of tasks from preparing equipment for lessons to PAT testing all the labs to ordering text books and budgeting. A variety of skills are clearly needed to do this job well. I think this is the place to paraphrase what head teacher Mr Fay said to me: school is like a duck, when you're a student you see it floating along the water and don't see its feet flapping frantically underneath.

A good technique I learned for assessing prior knowledge was done in a Year 9 class just after they had finished their end of topic test and they were preparing to move on to electric circuits. Mr Thompson had started a mind map on the whiteboard and invited the students to come up and write everything they knew about circuits. It was found the pupils knew less than Mr Thompson had assumed which showed that a little revision was needed before moving on to learn something new.

During the second week, I had the opportunity of attending a sixth form trip to Edge Hill university for a UCAS convention. It was a good experience to view trips from the more responsible side and was told the ins and outs of organising such a trip.

The third week came around fast. As the Year 11s and upper sixth had left, it was time for the Year 6 induction. For their science lessons, they were doing a simple experiment using the Benedict's test to find which of two solutions contained sugar, the context being about how energy drinks contain lots of sugar to give you energy. The idea was to give the pupils a taste of lab work as science is very limited at primary school. I helped the children set up the experiments and observed them as they conducted the test. This again exaggerated the diversity of abilities that teachers have to deal with.

The Year 9 physics class got their end of topic tests back that they had done the previous lesson. A technique that helped them get the most out of their test was to go through each question and have the class correct their own work. This got them thinking about their answers and should help them remember how to answer the questions next time.

I had a chance to go witness some Year 12 maths classes. This gave me a chance to see what it was like to teach a different subject and I could compare and contrast teaching methods. What I noticed was that in a maths lesson, you're teaching the student a set of skills that can be applied to a certain question. However, when teaching physics, you have to explain certain concepts and show how they can be described by mathematics. This can be difficult, especially if they haven't covered certain topics in maths. I can see how sometimes physics teachers may struggle if they need to take the role of the maths teacher as well as a physics teacher.

### **Department meeting**

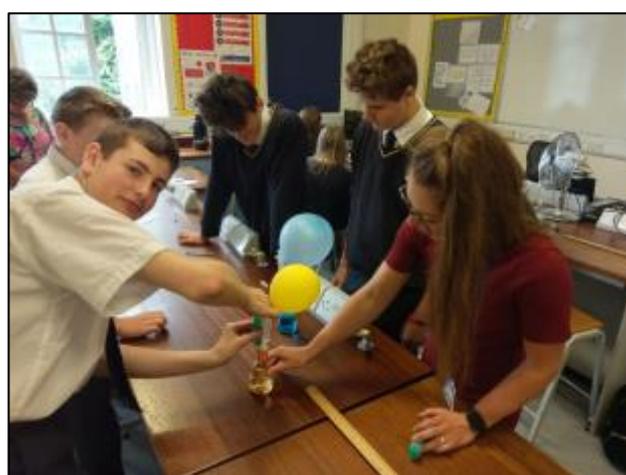
We had the opportunity to attend a department meeting. I was very surprised at the amount of admin that was discussed compared with the lack of conversation about the actual teaching of science. I feel so many great ideas could be formulated in that meeting but it was overshadowed by organising which teachers would teach which classes next Year. However, we did get a preview of an experiment firing rockets that had been devised and it was nice to see some innovation and originality!

### **On my own**

I had the chance to take the reins on a couple of lessons. The first of which being a Year 7 class, who I would be teaching about space, from the reason we have night and day all the way to the solar system. As it was their last science lesson of the Year, I wanted to make it a fun one. I created a PowerPoint presentation for the first 10 minutes and set them off on a research task. They worked in groups creating a poster about an object in the solar system using books and tablets to get their information. In the last 10 minutes, we finished off with a class activity having them all line up with their posters in the correct order from the Sun outwards and they each told us some of the interesting facts they found.

The children seemed to have enjoyed themselves and some good work was achieved. Mrs Gardiner gave me some helpful pointers for my next lesson such as having more of a structure (especially for the younger students), perhaps giving the students particular questions they had to answer or certain criteria they had to meet. Another thing that I needed to work on was projecting my voice, I just need to be a bit louder to overcome the class hubbub.

The second lesson I taught was a Year 9 physics class who were to learn about voltage. I found teaching and explaining something so abstract to be very difficult. I started with a definition, units and measuring instrument used. I then went on to show them how to use the voltmeter to measure the voltage before they went off on their own and measured the voltage in a variety of circuits. After they had finished, we reviewed what they had observed and finally worked on some questions to consolidate their understanding. Although this lesson had more structure, I still needed to work on projecting my voice.



Pictured above is me helping the pupils with the rocket experiment previewed in the department meeting. The Year 9s had to find the best combination of hydrogen and oxygen to make the rocket fly the furthest.

### **Other activities**

Our careers workshop consisted of an interactive presentation given to two separate Year 10 classes. We focussed on university life and the reason why physics is such a fantastic degree choice, but we also touched on student finance and the gender gap in the subject. The classes seemed engaged and informed by the end of the presentation so I considered it a success.

We had many opportunities to observe and take part in other activities put on by the school such as sports day and the 8-mile sponsored walk. We also got a chance to see how much organisation goes into said activities.

### **Reflection**

I have really enjoyed these five weeks back at school and there are so many things that I couldn't fit into this document. It has given me a real insight into the profession and even though I have done less than half the work of a regular member of staff, I feel quite drained.

Coming back to the reason why I started this internship, I wanted to gauge whether this career would be right for me. I can't quite say whether I have made up my mind yet as there are a lot of things to consider. It is fair to say this internship has opened my eyes to the world of teaching and whatever I decide in the future, this experience will be an integral part of that decision.