

SPOTLIGHT ON: Early Career Teachers



In Spotlight On, we catch up with our Early Career Teachers (ECTs) as they progress through the early stages of their career with us!

This time, we catch up with Liam Darlington, Teacher of Maths from Outwood Academy Acklam!

What first made you want to become a teacher?

Helping my younger brother learn trigonometry was the reason I wanted to become a teacher! There are other reasons too, of course. During my undergraduate degree, I often assisted lecturers during seminars to help in the learning process of my fellow students, and it was a role I found enjoyable; I like expanding upon and developing the understanding people have of mathematics.

“It is such an amazing feeling when you see the ‘lightbulb moment’”

How are you finding teaching so far?

It's stressful, but so rewarding. Some lessons can be harder than others, it doesn't really occur to someone before they become a teacher how much something as simple as it being windy can affect the personalities in the classroom; but it is such an amazing feeling when you see the 'lightbulb moment' in a student when they suddenly realise what they need to do to succeed.

How has your teacher training set you up for your first year as a teacher?

Teacher training prepared me for the vast majority of the classroom work I am doing, as well as the planning. One of the focuses of my training was on developing the effective habits of being a teacher, among them is how to manage your time, and not to waste any! That's useful not just as a teacher, but in most things you can do. Teacher training was hard, but being able to look at a class and know, with confidence, that you can effectively teach and help so many people is incredible.

What are your learnings so far?

I am learning more effective ways to deal with behaviour, as well as the ways data can be used to aid teachers. The ability to project your presence,

not just your voice, across a class, is incredibly important. To be able to catch and keep their attention through an explanation, through the making of the teacher model, and then into independent work.

Could you share any tips/advice for other ECTs or trainee teachers?

My biggest piece of advice would be to take every opportunity to learn more of the admin side of being a teacher; you need to hit the ground running with it as an ECT. Talk to the people around you in your department, get their advice on how to handle things, not just admin and planning, but students as well. Apart from Y7s, and late-joiners, every student you teach has probably been taught by one or more of the teachers around you, and they could have valuable advice on how to connect with and build that positive relationship that will aid you in class.

“The Outwood model allows specialists to share their knowledge across a wider area than one school”

How have you felt supported so far by the Outwood Family?

I have felt very supported. My last placement as an ITT was at Outwood Academy Valley, and it was such a supportive and warm environment that I specifically looked at Outwood for my ECT career. The Outwood model is very supportive for ITTs, ECTs and experienced teachers, with comprehensive weekly training for the whole school, and specialist sessions for ECTs and ITTs that draw from the depth of expertise inside the school. The presence of directors is also incredibly useful, and wouldn't be something you would find in an independent school, but the Outwood model allows specialists to share their knowledge across a wider area than one school.