

Teaching in a Pandemic



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Coming up to December and 4 months into our PGCE, we were unsure as trainees if we would be able to get experience in a different school during a traditional 'away placement' due to the situation with COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions. However, the SCITT team worked really hard to give us this vital experience. We began at our 'away' schools two weeks before Christmas, giving us a chance to settle in and prepare for teaching after the Christmas holidays. I found these two weeks really valuable for getting to know staff and school policies, meaning that I was ready to hit the ground running in January.

None of us expected to be teaching remotely for the entirety of our away placement, but we were supported fully in terms of remote learning training opportunities and given the tools we needed to adapt very quickly. My away placement was at Greenbank High School and gave me the chance to see what teaching in an 'all girls' school was like, contrasting with my home school which was a mixed gender school. Despite teaching all of my lessons online, I still built very strong, rewarding relationships with pupils and staff at Greenbank.

I learnt so much, not only about remote learning and pedagogical skills, but also how to stay resilient and confident in the face of constantly changing circumstances. I was given the chance to step up my independent teaching and I found that the away placement came at a really good time, allowing me to take skills I had begun to develop in the first phase of my home placement and apply them in a new situation.

There were a couple of things that helped me to really enjoy my away placement in a difficult time. The first was really being able to rely on the fantastic staff in my away school and my advice would be don't be afraid to lean on your mentors and class teachers, they are always willing to help if you just ask. As well as this, I genuinely don't think I could have gotten through without the support of other trainees, making those connections and looking after each other is so important.

Our away placements happened to be at the time when recruitment for NQT jobs began and positions were slowly starting to become advertised. During the away placement I interviewed for and accepted a role at Stanley High School starting in September, which is also part of AMP SCITT. Preparing for interviews and applying for jobs whilst teaching was tricky to juggle but again, the SCITT provided us with support in job applications and were always willing to help reading applications and practice interview skills. The away placement is great for enhancing your job prospects as you are able to make connections with teachers in different schools, giving you more potential opportunities.

The away placement was a really important time for me in terms of developing confidence and knowledge, and I feel as though it was a real turning point in my training. If I could go back and tell myself one thing it would be don't bother planning 20 classroom lessons in advance over Christmas because it will all be online! As well as that, my only tip would be to go into it with an open mind as you never know what will happen during your away placement. I will be finishing my PGCE at Stanley which will help me prepare for my NQT starting there in September and won't be returning to my home school, and I don't think I'd have believed you if you told me that back in December!