

Why is the alternative placement so important?



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February 2022

Starting in December, AMP SCITT trainees experience an eight week 'away' placement teaching in another school. At first, I was apprehensive about moving to a new school because I had perhaps become too comfortable with the daily routines of teaching in my 'home' placement, as well as benefiting from established relationships with both students and staff. However, I knew it was important to keep an open mind and realised it was an excellent opportunity to further develop and learn new skills in an unfamiliar setting.

There was a lot of new things to consider and account for such as: different policies, different cohort and students to build relationships with, different curriculum design, differences in behaviour and an increase in teaching hours. All of this felt quite daunting at first but the placement started with a two week observation period before Christmas holidays, which provided enough time to transition and prepare to start teaching in January.

During my observations, I immediately noticed some differences between my 'home' and 'away' placement. Lessons were a lot more student-led whereas I was used to a more teacher-led approach. This was extremely insightful, and I realised I would have the opportunity to practise and develop a completely different style of teaching. In doing so, I could use both experiences to help find what combination of teaching strategies works best for myself. Also, the behaviour appeared more challenging and so I realised that I would have the opportunity to improve my behaviour management too.

When I started my teaching, it took a little time to get back into the flow of things because of the four weeks away from teaching and the fact I had to start building rapport with six new classes. However, the science department and my allocated form tutor provided amazing support throughout the whole placement. At first, I found it difficult giving more responsibility to students for their own learning but soon after I really enjoyed experimenting with techniques within this different approach. With the fantastic support in place, I soon felt comfortable teaching 9 hours a week, alongside my wider responsibilities as a teacher such as break duties and as a form tutor. Getting to teach topics I hadn't taught before and using the advice and feedback from teachers really helped develop my ability to teach a broader range of scientific topics. It was interesting to receive different types of feedback and areas for development from new teachers which overall helped improve my teaching as a whole. The science faculty also helped massively with a job interview at St Julie's, for which I was successful in and greatly looking forward to starting in September.

Unexpectedly, I found changing from being a Year 8 form tutor in my 'home' placement to Year 10 in my 'away placement' really interesting. I found building rapport a lot quicker and that you communicate in a different way because they are KS4 students who are more mature and settled within the school.

My 'away' placement also provided an opportunity to experience a sixth form setting. Observing teachers in these lessons was completely different and made me realise that having a secure subject knowledge is vital in providing high quality A-level lessons. Having the opportunity to try teaching an AS level lesson was challenging but again a completely new experience that required a different style of teaching which I thoroughly enjoyed trying.

Reflecting on my away placement, I feel I have definitely progressed as a teacher in regard to developing and experimenting with new teaching techniques. The benefits of learning from a different set of teachers are clear and I feel my subject knowledge, assessment and behavioural techniques have progressed. My tip to future SCITT trainees would be to embrace the variety in teaching styles and school cultures during your away placement and not to be apprehensive. In doing so, from my personal experience, it has been vital in my ongoing professional development and I will continue to learn from others and improve in future to try to strive to become a better teacher.