

FROM TEACHING
ASSISTANT TO
TEACHER...

Case study Olivia Davies



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After completing her undergraduate degree in English and Fine Art at the University of Wales, Trinity St David, Olivia wasn't sure what to do next when it came to looking for a job. She knew she wanted to work with children, but wasn't sure how or where to start.

"I thought it would be a good idea to get some experience with children on a voluntary basis initially, just to double check that was definitely the route I wanted to go down. So I contacted the local primary school near my home in South Wales, who offered me a placement with them after meeting with me.

"Initially I volunteered as a classroom assistant for a few afternoons a week, which then became a full day – I would listen to children read, or help them with their work in the classroom. That's where it all started, because after a while a full time teaching assistant job opened up at the school, and I decided to go for it.

That was the start of her journey to becoming a fully qualified teacher.

"After about two years as a teaching assistant, my headteacher spoke to me about my potential and encouraged me to train to become a teacher myself. I was really pleased that she thought I could do it and would be good at it, but I didn't think I had it in me to go back to uni and train again, after having already done three years for my undergraduate degree.

"But my headteacher told me I could earn a salary whilst I trained in the same school I was already working in, meaning I already knew all the staff and children and didn't have to worry about taking 'time out' to train. Plus it would only take a year as I already had a degree, which was great as by that time I was 22 and most of my friends already had jobs and I was starting to feel like a bit left out! So it didn't feel like too much of a big step at all – it felt really achievable and like the obvious next step for me."

Olivia completed her teacher training after a year, and became a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) in the same school she had volunteered and trained at. And she hasn't looked back since.

"I know this might sound funny, but I love the responsibility being a teacher brings! I'm able to take charge, within reason, of my lessons and plan what I'm going to teach and the themes I'm going to cover – I can even work with the children to find out what they'd like to learn about too. Having that independence that I didn't have before, and the ability to think so creatively, is one of my favourite things about having taken that next step in becoming a teacher."

And Olivia's got some words of advice for other teaching assistants out there who may be considering moving up in their career.

"Teaching is a profession that truly brings people together. Everyone is in the job because they love helping children and working creatively with other people – that's probably why you're already a teaching assistant. You get such a range of experience and so many opportunities – no day is the same and there is so much variety you could never get bored.

"Staff are all really supportive and so are friends and family – everybody remembers their own experience of being in school, so everybody can connect and help you do the very best for your pupils. I've just taught a topic about the Romans, and my family who recently went on holiday to Italy brought back lots of postcards and objects for me to use in the classroom to help bring it to life.

I can't think of another job where there's so much goodfeeling about what you do – and it could be yours! It is absolutely doable – don't be afraid to make that move up, because you really can do it."

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