

FROM TEACHING
ASSISTANT TO
TEACHER...

Case Study Owen Gwyn Ifans



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Born and bred in Mold, Flintshire, Owen Ifans has now returned for the third time to his old secondary school. Having spent seven happy years there as a pupil, he returned as a teaching assistant, and he is now entering his third year as a fully qualified mathematics teacher.

A first language Welsh speaker, Owen has always loved maths and after studying it for A-level embarked on a mechanical engineering course at Cardiff University. Having also completed his Masters there and looking for jobs, his former Maths teacher called him asking if he'd be interested in coming back to Maes Garmon as a teaching assistant.

This was an eye opening experience for Owen:

"Until then I don't think I had considered going back to the classroom but I thoroughly enjoyed helping the children learn and understand mathematics, and it was great to see them developing day to day. That's when I decided I wanted to become a teacher and submitted my application to Bangor University."

During his training he had teaching placements at Ysgol Tryfan in Bangor and Ysgol Morgan Llwyd in Wrexham but when the time came for Owen to apply for teaching posts it was Maes Garmon again that beckoned:

"During my second teaching placement I saw an advert for Mathematics teacher at Ysgol Maes Garmon so I did not hesitate in applying - I was fortunate to be successful. I am now starting my third year there and think I am fortunate to be able

teach a subject I love to GCSE and A-level and doing so through my first language."

Owen is aware there is a historical belief that maths and science subjects would be better taught through the medium of English at a higher level, but his own experience contradicts this:

"I studied all my subjects through the medium of Welsh throughout school and switched to English on my university engineering course. Contrary to being problematic, I believe it actually helped me in that I had a wider understanding of the subject matter. I also think that it is even easier with my subject as Mathematics is a universal language in itself."

Having started out as a teaching assistant, Owen believes this has really helped him as he ventured into full time teaching:

"My experience as a teaching assistant has been invaluable; it allowed me to observe techniques that I have been able to action myself and adapt to my own teaching style, and it gave me greater confidence when preparing to stand in front of the class.

"Teaching is such a rewarding career and I feel that there is an even greater respect for the profession following the past months. In such uncertain times I feel fortunate to have a stable, long term career with continuous support available and I'd encourage anyone considering training to be a teacher to go for it - you certainly won't regret it."

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