

FROM
BIRMINGHAM TO
PEMBROKESHIRE...

Natalie
Jones



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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It may seem an unlikely story for a girl from Birmingham and of Jamaican origin to be embarking on a career teaching Welsh in Pembrokeshire - but that has been Natalie Jones's journey.

Having been brought up in Birmingham until she was nine years old, Natalie's family re-located to Pwllheli, where her father was from. The two areas could not have been more different, as Natalie recalls.

"It was quite a surreal experience: we were the only black students in the school and Welsh was now the main language being spoken. It proved though the importance of immersing oneself in a language, as my only 'A' grade in GCSE was in Welsh!"

Following her GCSEs Natalie completed an NVQ in business at Coleg Meirion Dwyfor before embarking on a career in retail and sales. She persevered with her Welsh studies and completed an NVQ in Welsh; it was during this time she felt a yearning to go into teaching, but as she had no degree, did not pursue it further.

Natalie did manage to embark on a child psychology course, however, and was considering a career as an educational psychologist - before she had a life changing diagnosis.

"It was at this time I was told I had cancer. I was fortunate in that it was treatable with an operation and a programme of radiotherapy and medication – but as is so often the case with such experiences, it gives you a new perspective on life.

"My aspiration to become a teacher was rekindled. I had been working as an Engagement and Learning Mentor within secondary schools in Pembrokeshire and more recently I have also been delivering hate crime workshops in schools for the Welsh Government in partnership with Race Council Cymru. This gave me a taste of working with children and young people, and I greatly enjoyed it.

"I am now approaching the end of my PGCE and have secured a post teaching in a primary school in Neyland with added responsibility for teaching Welsh as a second language throughout the school to the children and teachers – and I can't wait."

She is concerned with the lack of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic teachers in schools across Wales and hopes that the new curriculum will play a role in changing that.

"We need role models in all professions and teaching is no different – if you're a pupil of colour in school but don't see any teachers that look like you, you can easily think 'this is not the profession for me', but we need to change that.

"The embedding of the teaching of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories in the new curriculum is certainly a big step in the right direction and I very much look forward to playing my part in its delivery."

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