

SPOTLIGHT ON: Early Career Teachers



In Spotlight On, we catch up with our Early Career Teachers (ECTs) as they progress through the early stages of their career with us!

This time, we catch up with Frances Mather, Teacher of Design and Technology from Outwood Academy Valley.

What first made you want to become a teacher?

I wanted to make a difference to the future generations by being the role model they need - real and imperfect. The current generation seem to be glued to their phones with unrealistic ideologies. I want them to be inspired to become the real person that is standing in front of them. Allow them to see real passion, enthusiasm and emotions. Being a teacher is much more worthy of the title "influencer" than any YouTuber!

"I can't help but bring my job up in every conversation!"

How are you finding teaching so far?

I think teaching is great! I love it and it's mighty addictive - I can't help but bring my job up in every conversation! When new people ask me what I do for a living they all seem to pull the same disgusted face to my answer. It upsets me that the teaching profession and/or teenagers make people react this way. I always make sure I correct their poor judgement of the career and have even had friends apply for teacher training since! It truly is the best job out there!

How has your teacher training set you up for your first year as a teacher?

Brilliantly! I'm so pleased I chose the School Direct route into teaching as it prepared me well and allowed me a smooth transition from ITT to ECT 1. I enjoyed getting stuck straight into teaching from the very first day, I thrive from being thrown in the deep end. My mentors have all been hugely supportive and have helped mould me into the teacher I am today. The course always encouraged us as students to soak up as many different types of teaching as possible and learning walks helped me cherry pick ideas from other classrooms to implement my own practice and develop my craft. Teaching is very much about sharing ideas and positive ideas. When my ideas are used by others who have been teaching for years, I take it as a huge compliment.

"The days fly by, but in an enjoyable, positive way."

What are your learnings so far?

I've been learning how to be organised extremely fast! Secondary school life is very fast paced. I've never been in a job where I don't actually have time to check the time, never mind clock-watch. The days fly by, but in an enjoyable, positive way. I have learnt so much along the way but the biggest thing is to believe in myself. I began my teaching journey at a fairly low personal point in my life and teaching has given me the boost I needed to get back on track and spread positivity. It has given me back my sparkle!

Could you share any tips/advice for other ECTs or trainee teachers?

Do your best, give it your all and don't feel overwhelmed by looking too far into the future to begin with. Take one day/week at a time and deliver fabulous lessons that inspire your students. Set your stall out with behaviour management from the beginning and stick to it. Remember to have faith and keep positive - you've got this! Keep asking questions to your team and remember there is no shame in seeking support. Soak up all new knowledge like a sponge and take onboard feedback as this will always make you shine even brighter and it will improve your practice. Embrace and enjoy the journey - it is life changing!

How have you felt supported so far by the Outwood Family?

I have felt 100% supported! It really is one great big purple family! You don't need to stick to seeking advice in your departments, staff support each other throughout the school and into other schools, too. We are all here to help and support each other. We are role models after all, so we don't drag others down, we help drive them forward. Nobody gets left behind and there is a team spirit mentality to succeed together as one.