

Learner Experience

Name: Victoria Pinkney
Qualification: Teaching Assistant Level 3
Placement: The Hollies Pupil Referral Unit
Date: December 2016

My previous career was as a Criminal Defence Solicitor and as a Senior Law Lecturer on the Legal Professional Course. I then took an eleven year career break to be a full time Mum to my two daughters.

As my daughters became older I wanted to resume a career but not in the legal profession. I used to work with young offenders and wanted to continue to work with young people especially those with difficult backgrounds. Following research I decided that I wanted to retrain as a Teaching Assistant working specifically within a Pupil Referral Unit with pupils with challenging behaviour.

Teaching Assistant supporting pupils in all areas of the curriculum. I also have responsibility for taking several pupils to an external provision – The Company of Horsemen Project. I have also led cookery lessons. I have also acted as a support for pupil reintegration into mainstream school. I am also the school liaison for the Safer Schools Supporting School Programme and am looking also to train as the school CEOP Ambassador.

The apprenticeship has allowed me to access a totally new career path. It has also led to me being given the opportunity to train even further to enhance and develop my new career and to specialise in the areas of behavioural support.

Through my training with Entrust I learned about the Government Safer school scheme. Following enquiries made for one of my apprenticeship assignments I saw how the scheme had been developed in Staffordshire into the Supporting School Programme. I considered the scheme had many benefits that it could bring to my school to support our existing work in the areas of Safeguarding, the PHSE curriculum and the principles of every child matters. I approached our acting Headmistress to share with her my findings and as a direct result she gave me the authority to join our school to the scheme and to act as the school liaison for the partnership. As a result we now have coordinated input from a number of agencies including the police, fire service, T3 Drugs programme and Women's aid covering all areas of children's health and wellbeing – aimed at improving mental health and emotional wellbeing, anti-bullying, race and hate crime, awareness of fire safety, healthy relationships, substance misuse and internet safety.



The poster on internet safety I produced for my apprenticeship I shared with colleagues and it has been used in tutor time to strengthen the work we do in this area it also forms part of the school stay safe display board.

The work I have done in studying the 'Think You Know' programme has been developed further by my school and I am hoping to train as a CEOP ambassador.

The training I received around supporting child development and the need to promote self-esteem by rewarding effort rather than attainment and encouraging pupils to evaluate their progress against their own achievements led me to develop a recognition certificate for the pupils I support on the horse project to celebrate the character and virtues they have displayed.

In studying the importance of ensuring the curriculums accessibility to all I determined that some of the resources I was using during cookery lessons could be improved to become more SEN friendly. I carried out research and found a website which converts recipes to be autistic friendly by using visual aids to demonstrate the steps of the recipe – I have shared the website information with colleagues and the school SEN lead and am in the process of assisting the cookery lead to convert the school resources into the more SEN friendly versions.

My employers have been extremely supportive. The school Student Support Officer has been assigned as my mentor and has given me advice and guidance. I have attended professional development meetings to help me to advance my career and identify areas for progression. I was encouraged to apply for a full time position as a Teaching Assistant when a position became vacant which I was delighted to be awarded.

My headmistress operates an open door policy and has been extremely encouraging and has promoted my continued career development by suggesting I train as a CEOP ambassador. She supported the schools becoming part of the 'Supporting School' programme and has allowed me to be the school liaison for this.

December 2016

I have been taken on in a full -time capacity as a Teaching Assistant at my school. It is my intention to continue my training by going on to study to become a HLTA or to consider SCITT.

