

Diary of a North West SCITT Associate Teacher

Who'd have thought that my first few weeks in school would be so jam-packed with memorable moments that will live long in the memory? I certainly didn't expect the very beginning of my journey as a trainee teacher to truly capture the essence of my reason for entering this most rewarding of professions.

The highlight of my time in teacher training so far, bar none, has been our wild adventure to Chester Zoo. And despite what you may be thinking, it isn't because I myself got to visit one of my favourite places, as much of a perk as it well was! As I'm sure you can imagine, the build-up, anticipation and excitement levels of my Year 3 class were through the roof by the time "zoo day" rolled around. In the weeks preceding the trip I was met with endless daily questioning along the lines of "is it time for the zoo trip yet?" or "Mr Hatton, how many more sleeps until the zoo?". There was also the never-ending debates and discussion surrounding the children's favourite animals and why, I am assured, a penguin would beat a flamingo in a race.

It was, however, the exhilaratingly giddy and, at times deafening, double-decker bus ride to Chester when it first sunk in how monumental this trip actually was. Not only have these wonder-stricken seven-to-eight year olds been cooped up in their homes for best part of 18 months, thanks to the dreaded Big C, but for many, this was their first ever experience of the zoo. It made me recall my own first memory of the zoo during a school visit to Blackpool, and just as my Year 3 class will in years to come, I'll remember that day forever.

Even if one particular child was wholly unimpressed by the giant sloth peering at us from above, hiding in the ceiling having escaped his cage, to be able to play a small part in a day as important as this in the lives of these brilliant children was a complete pleasure.

Not only was our trek to the zoo fun and exciting for the children, it turned out to be very useful back in the classroom. The next day, the trip had afforded me the opportunity to utilise the children's experience during Science. I was able to make the teaching of vertebrates and invertebrates as relevant, memorable and joyous as possible. We related back to our time at the zoo, reflecting upon the animals we met that day and which categories they fall into as the children reminisced about their adventure.

By the end of just my first few weeks in school I had experienced the essence of why I was here. Seeing the expressions of wonder and awe on the children's faces when first hearing of their trip to the zoo, along with their absolute astonishment as they marvelled at their favourite animals and the impact which has continued in the following weeks (with a certain child continuing to enthuse about making wildlife connections), it made me reflect upon my decision to pursue this course; to help provide opportunity which can make a truly positive impact on children's lives. To put it more simply, this is why I wanted to become a teacher.