



Super staff (from left): Mrs Rowntree spends time with some of Forres Sandle Manor's many boarders; Day Matron Susan Hodges with a pupil at Farleigh School; and Christ College Brecon's David Bush

A NOBLE PROFESSION

We hear from the men and women at the front of the class about what inspired – and continues to inspire – them to take up teaching...

FOR all of the incredible facilities on offer at Britain's schools, the words of children's author Michael Morpurgo – "it's the teacher that makes the difference" – are a reminder of the power resting with the person at the front of the classroom.

Tasked with playing a lead role in youngsters' academic and personal development, teachers are the key asset in the mission to unlock the potential of successive generations.

But with such high stakes resting on their performance and additional pressure in the form of Ofsted inspections, paperwork and pastoral care

never far away, what makes people pick teaching as their profession of choice?

INSPIRED TO TEACH

The saying that "you never forget a good teacher" holds particular weight with Clare Rowntree, Head of Boarding at Forres Sandle Manor.

She said: "My teachers inspired me to follow in their footsteps, particularly my music teachers who ignited my passion for music-making and said that I would become a teacher myself one day!"

The same holds true for David Bush, Deputy Head Academic at Christ College Brecon. He explained: "I had a very good

experience in my own education about how teachers can make a difference to individual pupils," adding that his love of English literature inspired his choice of career.

The love of a particular subject also drew Dr John Weeds, Headmaster at Cranbrook School, into the classroom.

He got into teaching after completing a classics degree at Cambridge and then going on to do a PGCE at Durham University, where he met his wife, Sarah.

Dr Weeds told us: "I absolutely loved classics – especially the language, literature and history of Greece and Rome – and still do. I could think of no better

way to retain my connection with the subject than by going out there and teaching it."

Sarah O'Neill, of Scotland's Queen Victoria School, said she was motivated to teach through a love of history and a desire to work with people.

"My mum suggested teaching and from year 10 I knew that it was a good choice," she added.

PERFECT PROFESSION

The stresses and strains of teaching may not be for everyone, but many teachers view their role as a vocation.

Angharad Holloway, Headteacher at Talbot Heath School, described the profession as being about "lighting a flame" »

that will go on to burn brightly.”

She said: “I was motivated to take up teaching owing to my desire to imbue young people with intellectual curiosity and a love of learning that will help to shape their future lives.”

Joan Newby, Director of Pastoral of Care at Malvern St James Girls’ School, admits to being sure of her career choice from a very early age.

“I can’t remember a time when I didn’t want to teach – right from the age of seven, I knew that’s what I wanted to do,” she said. “I love the changing nature of teaching; it’s such a dynamic environment to work in.”

The opportunity to benefit others in a professional capacity was enough to tempt St Mary’s Shaftesbury Prep School Teacher Rebecca Dixon in front of the whiteboard.

“I have always been interested in helping others, and as a child thought I might like to be a doctor,” she said. “As I grew older, I had holiday jobs looking after children; many friends said I should become a teacher.

“It turned out that I didn’t enjoy science nearly enough to work in a medical field, but I loved English and drama, so using those skills, combined with the rewarding aspect of helping others and my enjoyment of children, naturally led me to teaching!”

For Alex Crowhurst-Jones, Assistant House Parent and Year Six Form Taker, it was the love of working with children that sparked a career

in teaching. She said: “They have an innate curiosity about life and the opportunity to nurture and guide them, engender and share in their love of learning, is great fun and hugely rewarding.”

MILITARY MATTERS

While many teachers join the profession straight from their studies, some enter the classroom having first served in other fields – including the Armed Forces.

Rookwood School Deputy Head Richard Hick became a teacher after leaving the Army as a lieutenant colonel following a 20-year career. He had served on two consecutive operational deployments and made the decision to retrain after thinking about what he most enjoyed.

“I realised what I was really passionate about was seeing others develop and playing a part in their learning and progression,” he said.

Operational deployments also played a pivotal role in Haberdashers Monmouth School’s Ian Lawrence’s conversion to the classroom.

He assisted in reopening a school in Goradze which had been closed for three years due to sniper fire and visited a school for the blind in Kabul where minimal resources were still met with great optimism.

He explained: “However gloomy my deployment was, it was the local children who often inspired me. Their vulnerability,



Ian Lawrence, Haberdashers Monmouth School



Joan Newby, Malvern St James Girls’ School

resilience and courage inspired me to become a teacher.”

The opportunity to escape the monotony of the corporate world was enough to entice Declan Rogers. The English teacher and Senior School Registrar at Taunton School quit his job at Barclays Bank in search of something more fulfilling, less boring and where turning a profit wasn’t the main motivation.

“I gave one of my former teachers a ring,” explained Declan. “He said he thought teaching was ‘a great profession’ and told me to throw in an application. I have loved teaching ever since and still enjoy the classroom as much now as I did when I very first started. There can’t be many jobs where you can say that!”

SCHOOL SELECTION

After making the decision to become teachers, those engaging with education face the important task of singling out the school at which they wish to ply their trade.

From location and facilities to specialisms and general “feel”, there are a host of factors which influence individuals’ decisions to start – and stay – at any particular school.

For Alex Foreman, Principal of The Duke of York’s Royal Military School (DOYRMS), the Services have been a common theme in his recent professional placements.

“I joined DOYRMS at the beginning of 2017 after being

headteacher for three years at King’s School, a Service Children’s Education School, based in Germany,” he explained. “The two schools have many similarities, including links with the military community.

“DOYRMS not only attracted me, but my children as well and they both attend the school.

“Dukies live and breathe the ‘Looking forward with confidence, looking back with pride’ mantra; everyday I’m amazed by our students and feel the core military values they show for themselves and towards others is evident to anyone they meet – it’s inspiring.”

For Jonathan Mercer, the beautiful grounds and buildings at Warminster School were enough to persuade him to apply for a job – but it is the relationships that have cemented his stay.

The physics teacher and Housemaster of Old Vicarage said: “What convinced me to accept the role and what keeps me here are the people – both staff and pupils – I have been lucky enough to work with.”

Sarah Boutwood, Head of Music at Packwood School, enjoys the fact that her current employer allows her to fully focus on music teaching in an idyllic Shropshire setting.

She pinpoints the school’s surrounds as one of the benefits of her post – but also singles out her colleagues, job satisfaction and even catering for praise.



Dr John Weeds, Cranbrook School



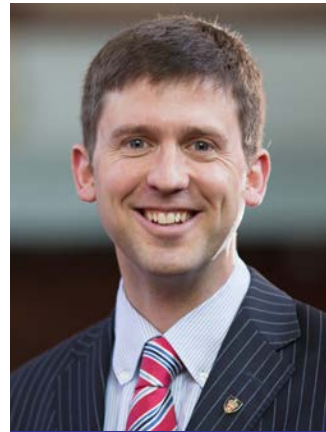
Alex Foreman, The Duke of York’s Royal Military School



Sarah Boutwood,
Packwood School



Richard Hick,
Rookwood School



Simon Heard,
St Lawrence College



Angharad Holloway,
Talbot Heath School

“Seeing pupils emerge as stronger, more confident and happier individuals is without doubt the most rewarding aspect of my role.”

– Jonathan Mercer, Warminster School –

“[I enjoy] the excellent school food, including the frequent supply of cakes in the staff room,” she told us. “Also being within striking distance of the Lake District for fell walking – my husband and I are working our way through all 214 Wainwrights!”

Location and colleagues are also among the motivations for Simon Heard, Deputy Head (Registrar) at St Lawrence College. He explained: “[The college] is in a great location for us as a family – proximity to London and to France, great beaches, fantastic cycling routes and loads of places to visit like Canterbury and Dover Castle.

“I love working here because the job is always busy, interesting and inspiring. The staff here are great and work really hard and the school is doing really well, which helps to keep the working environment so positive.”

Malvern St James’ Joan Newby praised her school’s “home-from-home” community, adding: “It is located in the beautiful country town of Malvern and the setting is so picturesque.

“I felt it was the perfect career move for me – and I have loved working here ever since.”

Alex Crowhurst-Jones was equally effusive about

the beautiful Hampshire countryside surrounding Farleigh School.

She continued: “Being a catholic school, with a genuinely caring ethos which permeates every area of school life, and a staff room packed with committed and talented teachers, make it a very special place indeed to live and work.”

Alastair Cook, Headmaster at The Downs Malvern, told us that the way the school’s pupils engage with the broad academic curriculum and develop as people keep him enthused.

“The inspiration for producing such an exciting environment for our children is simply the expressions of joyful awe of learning and celebration of achievements that adorn their faces every day,” explained Alastair, who arrived at the school following a headship in Kenya’s Great Rift Valley.

WELCOME CHALLENGE

Wonderful settings, classy colleagues and enthusiastic learners aside, the pressures of modern education mean that teaching does not come without its challenges.

But for the teachers we spoke to, each potential pitfall was viewed more as an opportunity – and was more than matched by the number of rewards that

teaching brings.

The “seismic” changes in technology and the need to stay relevant were highlighted by Declan Rogers at Taunton School, who spoke of the importance of embracing change rather than being tempted to always stick with tried-and-tested methods.

He added: “No question the most rewarding part of the job is seeing the kids develop; either those whom I have taught or those whom I have helped to come to the school.”

Warminster School’s Jonathan Mercer said that while his pastoral responsibilities were a serious subject, he relished the opportunity to enact positive changes in pupils by allowing them to challenge themselves whilst feeling safe and supported. He said: “Seeing them emerge as stronger, more confident and happier individuals is without doubt the most rewarding aspect of my role.”

For DOYRMS Principal Alex Foreman, the chance to develop his school’s leadership capabilities and empower staff and students was a significant plus, allowing him to ensure “great opportunities, great teaching and great outcomes”.

Richard Hick at Rookwood School identified his biggest

SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

CHAFYN GROVE

Salisbury, Wiltshire
chafyngrove.co.uk

CHRIST COLLEGE BRECON

Brecon, Wales
christcollegebrecon.com

CRANBROOK SCHOOL

Cranbrook, Kent
cranbrookschool.co.uk

THE DUKE OF YORK’S ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL

Dover, Kent
doyrms.com

FARLEIGH SCHOOL

Andover, Wiltshire
farleighschool.com

FORRES SANDLE MANOR

Fordingbridge, Hants
fmsmschool.com

HABERDASHERS’ MONMOUTH SCHOOLS

Monmouth, Wales
habs-monmouth.org

MALVERN ST JAMES

Great Malvern, Worcestershire
malvernstjames.co.uk

PACKWOOD SCHOOL

Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shropshire
packwood-haugh.co.uk



Declan Rogers,
Taunton School



Alastair Cook,
The Downs Malvern School



Jonathan Mercer,
Warminster School

“It is an immense privilege being a house parent, playing such an important part in a child’s life.”

– Clare Rowntree, Forres Sandle Manor –

challenge as finding many youngsters too used to having so much done for them.

He said: “Drawing upon my experience of working life and the challenges I faced in the Army, I strongly believe we need to develop pupils’ independence and resilience – to do that we have to give our young men and women responsibility and let them get on.

“Of course we support, teach and guide but I am a real fan of allowing young people to ‘lead in their learning’ and to think on their own.”

Christ College Brecon’s David Bush pinpointed playing a part in helping pupils achieve the best results they can as his personal highlight.

“It still bothers me after 30 years in the job if someone doesn’t live up to their potential,” he explained. “As a senior manager I also enjoy solving problems and trying to offer balance and perspective on whole-school issues.”

The opportunity to make children smile and enjoy their learning remains a powerful motivator for Mrs V at Chafyn Grove, who told us: “It is important to have a sense of fun and humour in teaching so as to engage the children and make memories that they will carry with them through

into adulthood.”

His enduring love of classics means that Cranbrook’s Dr Weeds gets great pleasure from spending time in front of pupils in the classroom, but his senior position has required him to develop equal expertise in management.

Reflecting on his financial responsibilities, he said: “We have been remarkably resilient as a school and even though funding has been tight we have innovated when it would have been easier to take refuge.

“We have mounted a successful fundraising campaign to equip ourselves with a new sixth form centre [and] continue to refine our teaching and learning processes so that student-centred learning and student leadership remain defining characteristics.”

Clare Rowntree at Forres

Sandle Manor said that admin challenges such as keeping on top of her email inbox are more than balanced out by the perks of her job.

She explained: “My daily interaction with the children is without doubt the most rewarding aspect. It is an immense privilege being a house parent, playing such an important part in a child’s life.”

And Ian Lawrence concluded that he enjoyed applying the core values he learned in the Army to his pupils’ education.

He said: “Watching boys generate the courage to try something outside their comfort zone can also be exhilarating and seeing them develop is enormously satisfying.

“One of the greatest challenges is learning to accept ‘failure’ and then encouraging boys to get up and try again.” ■



Rebecca Dixon,
St Mary’s Shaftesbury

SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

QUEEN VICTORIA SCHOOL

Dunblane, Scotland
qvs.org.uk

ROOKWOOD SCHOOL

Andover, Hants
rookwood.hants.sch.uk

ST LAWRENCE COLLEGE

Ramsgate, Kent
slcuk.com

ST MARY’S SCHOOL

Shaftesbury, Dorset
stmarys.eu

TALBOT HEATH

Bournemouth, Dorset
talbotheath.org

TAUNTON SCHOOL

Taunton, Somerset
tauntonschool.co.uk

THE DOWNS MALVERN

Colwall, Worcestershire
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