

Katharine Parker Secondary School Geography Teacher at the George Dixon Academy, Birmingham



About the role

1. Can you give a brief overview of your career to date?

After graduating from QMUL in 2016 with a BSc degree in Geography, I studied PGDipEd Geography at the University of Birmingham.

As part of the course I trained in two schools, teaching pupils from year 7 to Sixth Form. I was offered a job as Teacher of Geography in my first placement school on the last day of the Autumn term. I started my job at George Dixon Academy in Birmingham three weeks before the end of the school year and I am now looking forward to starting my NQT year in my very own classroom.

2. What does your current role involve (e.g. key responsibilities)?

Currently, as a Teacher of Geography (NQT) I teach Geography to 13 groups from year 7 to GCSE. I work within an experienced department helping to create and teach an engaging and inspiring Geography curriculum. I also have a year 7 form group to which I teach PSHE. I monitor and record the progress of all my pupils both educationally and personally and discuss this with parents and guardians when necessary.

3. What attracted you to your job?

My job title might be teacher of Geography, but as a secondary school teacher, I am primarily a teacher of young people. It is not just my responsibility to guide the pupils educationally ensuring they reach or exceed their targets, I need to ensure the well-being of all my pupils and play a part in equipping them with the skills and aptitude they need to flourish and succeed in their adult life. Whilst this can be challenging, it is extremely rewarding and it is this along with the chance to share my passion for Geography that attracted me to this job.

4. What are you working on at the moment?

During the summer holidays, I have been planning my first few lessons for September, but most of all I have been going into school to decorate and organise my classroom. I really wanted the room to be a bright and inspiring learning environment with displays that will support their learning and encourage a positive attitude.



(Before and after pictures of my classroom)

5. What do you most enjoy about your current role?

The thing I most enjoy about my current role is the breakthrough moments which make this career so rewarding. Breakthrough moments can include moving forward with building a relationship with a pupil or watching a pupil have a 'lightbulb moment' or understand something and seeing the sense of pride they feel for their achievement.

6. What's the working environment like in as a Geography teacher?

I work within a department of four Geography teachers (including myself) and this is part of a social sciences faculty consisting of History, RE, Law and Psychology. On paper, I need to be in work for 8:20 for briefing and I can leave after 15:20 however, I can be in school from 7:00 preparing for the day and leaving at 18:00 or taking work home with me. School holidays are also busy with preparing for the next term.

Career and experiences to date

7. Did you know what you wanted to do before you left university? How did you arrive at this?

Ever since I was a little girl, I have always had ideas of being a teacher of some sort. It was my Geography Teacher at secondary school that inspired me to choose both the secondary school and Geography route. Being an ambassador for the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and speaking with Kate Amis (Widening Participation and Schools Liaison Officer at the QMUL School of Geography) really cemented my wish to become a Teacher of Geography and turned it from an idea into something I knew I would be able to do and would really enjoy.

8. What was the most useful thing you did before you graduated that you think helped you get your current job?

The most useful thing I did before graduating that helped me with my current job was volunteering as an ambassador with the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), working as an ambassador for the School of Geography and volunteering and becoming a Girl Guiding Leader for Rainbows and Brownies. This allowed me to gain experience and confidence to work with young people and talk with parents and guardians.

You can find out more about my experience as a Geography Ambassador with the RGS in a post I wrote for the 'QMUL student life' blog at:

<https://blogs.studentlife.qmul.ac.uk/author/katharine-parker>

Advice to students

9. What tips would you give to current students wanting to get into teaching?

I hear a lot of people saying that they might just settle for teaching because they are not sure what else to do after graduating. I would argue that teaching isn't something you can just settle for, it is a lot of hard work and requires a lot of dedication. My advice would be to get as much experience in secondary schools and working with young people as possible to make sure it is something you would enjoy and be able to dedicate a huge amount of your time to.

Further information

Find out more about getting into teaching (including routes in and funding that may be available to you) on the government website 'Get into Teaching' at:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk> and on the Prospects website at:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/teacher-training-and-education/getting-a-teaching-job>

Read the Prospects job profile on being a secondary school teacher at:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/secondary-school-teacher>

Read the Prospects job profile on being a primary school teacher at:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/primary-school-teacher>

Find out more about the RGS Geography Ambassador Scheme at:

<http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Schools/Careers+and+Further+Study/Promoting+and+supporting+geography+in+your+school+or+college/Geography+Ambassador+scheme/Geography+Ambassador+scheme.htm>

Case study first produced in October 2017