



### **Why I chose School Direct at Oriel**

I was nearly 40 when I decided to change career to become a teacher. It was a big step, so I took some time to test it out first. The first thing I did was to contact a few local schools to ask if I could visit for a day. Many schools are happy to host prospective trainees for “teacher experience days”, and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Oriel was the first school I visited, and I was blown away by the professionalism of the staff and the overall feel and warmth of the place. What I most enjoyed about the visits though was being able to talk to the students in the lessons I observed and getting a real feel for what a school day is like 20 years on from when I was last in one myself as a student.

I also attended the Brighton and Sussex University PGCE open evenings, and spoke to the tutors and school reps there. I settled on the Schools Direct Tuition training route in the end simply because I wanted to be able to choose which school I would mostly train at, rather than being allocated one by the uni. I applied to Oriel and to two other schools, all affiliated to Brighton University, and was offered places at all three. I chose Oriel mainly because my interview gave me the impression that it was the school I would learn most from. Now half way through my training year, I know I was right!

There are two watch-outs I would flag to any prospective trainee. First is the one every teacher will say: workload. The training year is really full on. I found that once I was teaching all my timetabled lessons from November onwards I was working every spare hour of every evening and weekend. So, make sure that is something you are prepared for. And I don't imagine the first year as a qualified teacher will be any different either.

The second is choose your training route carefully. For me, the school input into the training course has been by far the most valuable part. With hindsight I probably would have chosen the Schools Direct Salaried route or even the apprenticeship, because as far as I understand it that means even more of the training is provided by the school rather than uni. But that said, the university time does provide welcome respite from the school workload sometimes, plus, depending on your chosen subject, the funding for the university tuition routes can be higher than the unqualified teacher salary.

**Dean Gargano, PGCE Schools Direct Tuition, Modern Foreign Languages**

---

## **Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship (PGTA) at Oriel**

In January 2021 I decided to apply for teacher training. I always knew that I wanted to teach Geography but I also had a MSc. in Structural Geology and Geophysics so I was open to teaching science as well. I have always considered teaching but after I finished university I fell into a job as an Events Coordinator in London. During my time there I had two children (1 and 3). My job had nothing to do with Geography and I missed it greatly, plus I was driven by a desire to have a job which my own children could be proud of and I wanted to inspire some of the future generation of Geographers.

When I applied there was no funding at all to teach Geography and I was faced with the prospect of not earning for a year and paying for university fees, I also have never learnt to drive. When looking for potential courses I thereby only looked at ones which paid a wage (to help cover the nursery fees) and which I could travel to by public transport. There were no paid Geography positions in my local area, however I found that Oriel were advertising for a Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship (PGTA) and that it was salaried. I had never heard of this kind of training before but I did a little research and found out that I would start teaching straight away, work 4 days a week learning all the practical aspects of teaching and then have 1 day a week at the University of Brighton in order to learn all the theory.

Prior to starting Oriel, I kept on being told by all the teachers and lecturers that Oriel was an exemplary training school and Oriel did not disappoint. They have been amazing every step of the way and have been so supportive, it is truly a lovely community where everyone is kind, welcoming, friendly and altruistic. I am a Geography trainee but Oriel have also given me the opportunity to teach some KS4 Physics and I am really relishing the challenge.

Although teacher training is tough and most of the time you feel like there are not enough minutes in the day and there are those occasional days of self-doubt where you feel like you could do better. The moments do not last for long, there is always someone nearby whether it be a member of staff or a student who will say something unexpected to give you that confidence boost. The students at Oriel are amazing and surprise me daily (in a good way), there is nothing like the buzz of teaching a lesson and seeing the lightbulb moment of a student suddenly understanding something they struggled with before. Teaching is by far the most engaging and rewarding job I have ever done.

## **Poppy Brett, Postgraduate Teaching Apprentice Salaried, Geography**

---

### **Why I chose Oriel High School and School Direct.....**

I started my journey into teaching in 2016. I'd been turned down for a PGCE place twice earlier in my career but had seen the adverts on TV saying how keen they were for Science teachers and that you could be paid whilst you trained so I thought I'd have another try.

My first port of call was the UCAS website which I found absolutely baffling so I decided to call my local university (Brighton) to see if I could find out more. I was able to get in touch with Brian Marsh (I later discovered it would be he who would be interviewing me for my place!) who gave me lots of advice on the potential routes into teaching and advised I get in touch with the 2 schools who he knew had places available. One school made me feel like I was a nuisance for calling, but undeterred I made a call to the second school

on the list, Oriel. I spoke with Helen who gave me lots of guidance on the process and also invited me in for a "school experience day" which was absolutely invaluable.

The day in school was much harder than I'd imagined, and I was shattered by the end of the day but also invigorated at the chance to make a difference to these kids. I was hooked and filled in my application over the following days.

My interviews at the University went well and as they say one thing led to another and before I knew it, September rolled around and I was in reception feeling lost! I was introduced to my mentor "Pete" who made the whole process seem possible and over the next few days and weeks I slowly built my confidence in the classroom. Schools direct was perfect for me, as there was a great balance between the support I needed to feel confident and the autonomy that I was given to try new ideas. There was so much support on offer from the University, Oriel, my mentor etc but it was great to be able to call on this when I needed and to be able to try to stand on my own 2 feet when I felt like I wanted to. All of the staff were supportive and I was really made to feel that I was part of the team.

I'd absolutely 100% recommend the school experience days to anyone interested in getting in to teaching. Schools are such a vibrant environment, but you must be realistic about your expectations and this is a great way to see schools with "no filter." I'd also recommend getting on touch with universities and school ITT providers and actually talking to them. You can get such a better feel of the character of these places over the phone and in person than you can by email.

**Nigel Hunt, School Direct Salaried Trainee, Science**

---

### **Why I choose School Direct.**

Oriel High School has played a really important role in my journey so far in becoming a secondary school science teacher. From answering the many questions that I had when I was first contemplating my career change, to being my host school as part of my PGCE School Direct programme, Oriel High School has helped both to guide and support me.

My first impressions of the school were brilliant. The welcome I received from the reception team; the politeness of the students and the friendliness of staff all contributed towards a really positive experience. And it was the supportive environment of the science team that cemented by decision to train at Oriel.

If you're thinking about a career change, get yourself on one of the 'school experience days' held every Wednesday in the school. It's well organised, you get to meet and question members of the senior leadership team and most importantly, you'll get chance to spend time in the classroom in your subject area, observing teachers in action, helping you decide whether teaching is the right career choice for you.

I'm only a couple of months into my training and I can honestly say that I'm loving every minute of it! It's challenging, it's exhausting, but most of all, it's rewarding!

**Louise Wardle, Biology School Direct Trainee**

---

### **My PGCE experiences at Oriel High School**

When I decided to pursue a career in teaching in the spring of 2019, I quickly realised how much impact your school placements can have both on your training year and the future. As a PGCE student, I recognised that my first teaching placement would be pivotal to shaping my educational values and future professional practice. With that in mind, Oriel has been the perfect match.

Having encountered Oriel at local teaching recruitment events, I was immediately impressed by the outgoing attitude of all their staff and their wholesale commitment to nurturing teacher trainees. From then on, I made it my mission to campaign for a training place as part of my placements for my PGCE, and I have not looked back since. From my very first day, I was inspired by the school's remarkable atmosphere and ethos, where both students and staff make sure to treat each other with respect and courtesy. It has made a tremendous difference to my initial training to know that I am in a safe and encouraging environment to grow, and that I can give back to the school by learning to be the best teacher I can be whilst on the job.

**Ben Golding - Media and English PGCE trainee**