

# James – PGCE Languages

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## **Degree and classification:**

I graduated from the University of Manchester in 1996 with a 2:1 in German Studies with French and Russian. I had always been interested in Modern Foreign Languages and knew from quite a young age that I wanted to pursue a career using my languages.

## **What was your work experience prior to embarking on the PGCE course?**

After graduating, I had intended to embark on a PGCE course straight away but after careful consideration, I realised that I couldn't actually face another year of studying and wanted to get a job using my languages but always knew that I would complete my PGCE at a later date. As a result, I worked for British Airways as an air steward for six years, working on the short haul fleet out of Birmingham International Airport. This was not only great fun but also gave me the opportunity to use my languages and travel to many interesting European destinations and spend some time there. We had many night stops in Germany and France so, again I was able to put my linguistic skills to good use. After leaving British Airways, I worked as a translator for a Worcester based marketing company for a year. During this time I applied for a place on the PGCE course at the University of Worcester. Translating was well-paid but rather dull and I was looking forward to a more stimulating career as a teacher.

## **What experience of working with schools and or children did you have before embarking on the PGCE course?**

Prior to embarking on the PGCE course, I had worked as an assistant in a German grammar school for a year as part of my degree and had also spent some time on work experience placements in nursery, first schools and special schools in France, Germany and the UK but I decided that my interests were purely in secondary education. Naturally, I spent time in a secondary school in England before submitting my application, so I arranged to have a work experience placement in a Worcestershire high school for two weeks. This was extremely useful as I was able to share my findings at interview for my PGCE course.

## **How did the PGCE course prepare you for your NQT year?**

The PGCE course at the University of Worcester was excellent in preparing me for my NQT year as it was based heavily on the notion of 'reflection' and being a reflective practitioner is fundamental to being a successful teacher. The assignments were useful as they successfully mixed theory and practice and the commentaries that had to be submitted as part of the portfolio allowed me to track my development and recognise just how far I'd come in a short space of time. Both of my placements were outstanding and I was well supported by both professional and subject mentors in both institutions. The gradual increase in teaching workload also helped me prepare for a 90% NQT timetable too.

## **What impact did the PGCE course have on your early career?**

My first position was as a languages teacher at Droitwich Spa High School and my PGCE was so useful as I was able to bring all of my ideas, observations, resources and pedagogy to my new role. I was still in close contact with my Course Tutor from the University of Worcester and she remained very supportive throughout my NQT year. I delivered training to the new recruits at University of Worcester, explaining to them how to prepare for your NQT year which I'm sure was mutually beneficial.

## **What has been your career path to date and what are your aspirations?**

I was promoted to the position of Head of German/Assistant Head of Department at the end of my NQT year and was very pleased to have made such rapid progression in my career. Two years later I became an Advanced Skills Practitioner, assisting other teachers with their professional development. Very early on in my teaching career, I was given the opportunity to mentor and coach PGCE and GTP students from the University of Worcester, allowing me to share my experience to a greater extent and learn new ideas from the trainees. In 2009 I became Lead Practitioner at south Bromsgrove High School and a year later was promoted to Head of Languages Faculty. My rise through the ranks has been quite meteoric and I'm happy in my current position and have no aspirations to move any further up the ladder at the moment. Teaching and Learning still inspires me and I look forward to coming to school (almost) everyday! (We all have an off day!)