York Students in Schools Case Study

James Carr - History

What have you gained from your experience?

- I learnt much about what working in a school is actually like. The placements were a great chance to experience the process of teaching – the various methods, strategies and repetition techniques that teachers employ to help pupils understand the subject and gain from their class. I learnt how important it is to appreciate different perspectives. I also realised that I preferred teaching older children, because they are more academically developed and seemed to have more ideas about what they would like to do, or the way they choose to approach a specific issue.

What were the highlights of your placement?

- I really enjoyed working individually with pupils, because I felt I was personally able to make a real difference. This was very rewarding in both my placements. In the Medieval History class, I even got the opportunity to do a short presentation and Q&A session on using Primary Sources. This was very rewarding as I was able to apply what I had been studying at university that term to help the pupils give an added dimension to their academic work.

If you are interested in getting involved in a volunteering role like this, or have something else in mind, please get in touch with us at volunteering@york.ac.uk and we will be happy to help you.
What advice would you give students considering taking part?

- I would advise students to approach placements with an open mind and to be willing to try different things out as they present themselves, as I believe you will always get the most from an experience with this kind of mentality. Being active also applies in class; I would say to volunteer points or advice where this would helpfully align with what the teacher is trying to achieve in the exercise or presentation. This is likely to benefit the pupils and make you a positive asset to the class, rather than merely a passive observer. Equally, however, it is important to listen to what pupils are saying and asking, and to wait and let them express things in their own way; you will then understand their concern or problem better and so your help will be more beneficial.

The logbooks are also incredibly useful in enabling you to keep a running record of what you have done, what you thought or felt about or gained from a certain task or experience, and are great to look back on.

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