

Trudi Rainsberry, BPhil in Special Education: Autism (Children) 2010



Current role

Working in a mainstream primary school supporting a child with an ASD and ADHD as SEN Assistant.

What first attracted you to do your course at University of Birmingham?

I found out about the course through friends who had previously followed CPD training and had decided to continue onto an Advanced Certificate in Autism (Children). I began on the Advanced Certificate but decided to convert to the BPhil Course because I found myself really enjoying the new academic challenge.

Were there any other factors that influenced your decision?

The University has a very good reputation and the staff are extremely eminent in the field of autism and special education.

Why did you choose your course of study?

Having 2 children on the autistic spectrum and working with children with ASD, I had gained a large amount of experience and I felt it was a valuable qualification where I could use my experience, whilst learning the subject at a higher level.

What are your fondest memories of the University?

My favourite aspect of the course were the lecture weekends where you met people from all over the country and beyond with a similar interest and enthusiasm for autism.

How did you grow as a person by coming to the University?

It allowed me to focus on my own ability to learn and follow something I am passionate about, outside of caring for my family and work.

What did you think of the learning experience in the School of Education?

The School of Education has enabled me to gain a degree in an area that will allow me to further my career in working with children on the autistic spectrum.

What are the benefits of studying part-time or at a distance?

The benefits are that you can work from home and at your own pace.

Did you find your work interfered with your study time?

It was not work that interfered with my ability to focus and study but having a busy family life did make it very difficult at times. My children are all active in out of school activities so having block periods of study time were very hard to find.

Did you find the course at Birmingham challenging or easy?

The distance education course was extremely well structured and presented, which made following the coursework criteria clear. However, it was a huge challenge because I had been out of education for 23 years and was working whilst bringing up 3 children, 2 of whom were also working towards important exams.

Did you find your studies were immediately applicable to your career?

Yes, it was very pertinent and also made the course easier as it could be used and applied to essay and research projects.

Advice for current students

Make sure that you keep in contact with your tutor and ask for help, it is easy to struggle unnecessarily but an email can often allay your worries.

If you find a course that inspires you and you want to gain a qualification you have always aspired to...then 'Go for it!' I never imagined I would end up with a degree when I started on the Advanced Certificate course (too scared to commit to the full BPhil) but I am so pleased I did. Amazingly, your family do survive not always having their meals on time or clothes ironed!