

Mikala Moore-Haines



PGDipEd (PGCE Advanced) in Early Years

What were you doing before you came to the University of Birmingham?

Before I commenced my teacher training, I managed a private out of school club for one year. I managed the day to day running of the club; this included planning and directing activities for children aged 4-11 years, ensuring the club was age appropriate, fun, stimulating and safe. A variety of activities were on offer, including bug hunting, gardening, forest school activities, dance and drama, cooking, orienteering, arts and crafts, reading and comprehension clubs, ICT club, different sports and games, and beginner's French club. As well as this, I managed a small team of five key workers, tutoring the NVQ apprentices and liaising with outside agencies to provide sports and dance activities. I would also manage monthly budgets and finances with regard to invoicing parents for their childcare and managing staffing payments. In addition, I created club policies and risk assessments in line with OfSTED requirements.

Prior to this post as club co-ordinator I completed my undergraduate BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies degree at Liverpool John Moore's University, where I achieved a first classification. This course provided me with an excellent knowledge base that covers a wide range of areas that affect children's lives, including education, families, and policy and child development. I believe this gave me an excellent start to my teaching career.

What inspired you to become a teacher and do your training at Birmingham?

I knew I always wanted to work with children; I have always had a great connection with them. I began looking into teacher training when I chose my options after A-levels. This was when I was told by a tutor that I would never be able to teach "I was not clever enough and would never amount to anything". At the time I was working at a Harvester Restaurant and was asked to train as a manager. The same tutor told me to: "Take what I could"! I then studied my undergraduate degree as I wanted to be sure I was choosing the right career for me, but I was determined to show all that had doubted me, and prove to myself that I could do anything I put my mind to. But most importantly I wanted to make a difference to future children to ensure they were never told they would fail before they have begun!

I chose Birmingham to study my PGCE because I believed I would gain the most from this diverse area. But I specifically chose The University of Birmingham because of its fantastic reputation and outstanding status as a teacher training provider.

What do you enjoy most about your course here at Birmingham?

The varied experience I have gained from my placements has been the most valuable experience for me, I feel ready to face what may come my way in my NQT year. I most definitely enjoy being in a small friendly group for the early years course, it personalises the experience for you more. This would not be possible without the tutors, lecturers and staff on the PGCE. They really do have your best interests at heart and want to see you achieve not just for the reputation of the university but for their love for teaching and making a difference.

What do you find challenging, and why?

I definitely find it hard to manage everything the work load, time and my life. There are definitely not enough hours in the day. Every PGCE student will tell you, you need to learn to except that some things will just not get done...they will eventually get done though! It is also very important to look after yourself and have time out, which is why I suggested building strong friendships from the start!

If you've had a school placement - how did you find it and how has it helped develop your teaching?

Teaching placements are key to the PGCE, I have had a fantastic experience, with such varied placement schools. It has developed my teaching completely from placement to placement. I have gained so much, in confidence, practice and getting ready for my own class. I would definitely say that the great relationship the University of Birmingham has with schools has supported me. My advice would be to grab the experience in schools with both hands from the start of the placement, gain every experience you can, while you can! Learn from others, ask and share worries, difficulties and successes.

What are you enjoying most about your time here as a student?

I specifically enjoy the closeness of my course, there are only approximately 30 students enrolled on the early years course, we are all in the same position and understand each other more than anything. I definitely wouldn't have enjoyed the course as much as I have without the friends and relationships I have made along the way. So for any successful applications I urge you to make good friends as soon as you can and ensure you nurture them friendships because they will pull you through the low moments.

Would you recommend this course to others? If so, why?

One hundred percent, yes! Not only does the course provide you with a varied experience within different schools in Birmingham but it prepares you for teaching "in the real life" because it is comprehensive in lectures and support. I would definitely tell others about the tutors and lecturers being the most valuable asset to studying a PGCE at The University of Birmingham as they really are on your side! They do everything they can to help and support you and give you the boost you need in such a demanding year.

What are your plans after you have graduated?

I gained employment in March as a NQT in a school in Leicester, I will be teaching Nursery.