

Teaching Maths – a career changer’s perspective

If the new year has had you thinking about a career change, have you thought about secondary mathematics teaching? Career changers are very welcome to apply to the Mathematics Teacher Training Scholarships, one of the benefits being continuing professional developments events which are free for Maths Scholars to attend.

Maths Scholar Russell Brooks did just that, leaving behind a career as a lawyer to start secondary mathematics initial teacher training. If you want to know why he decided on this change, read on ...

Vanessa Thorogood

Maths Scholarships Project Manager

I have been a trainee Maths Teacher for one half-term. Before that, I was a lawyer, spending the last 19 years working in-house for a global pharmaceutical company. As I reflect back on the transition from one to the other, there are absolutely no regrets (yet).

Why the change? There were many reasons. I was not unhappy in my old career: I was well paid; I worked with nice people; and I believed in the mission underpinning my work. However, for a number of years, my enthusiasm had been waning – too many meetings, too many emails and too much time spent discussing how to do things rather than doing it. I could only see more of the same for the future and after a re-organisation I was offered the chance of



taking redundancy. That offer started me thinking about what I *really* wanted.

In my spare time, I have been a scout leader and youth rugby coach for years. I knew that I enjoyed working with young people. I find it hugely rewarding to give young people opportunities that will enable them to develop life skills and grow into positive, confident contributors to society. Given that it is what I spend my spare time doing (for free!), it seemed only natural to move into education where my hobby becomes my career.

What were the biggest challenges for me? I think probably the negativity expressed by the profession itself. Sitting outside education, the overwhelming impression is that teaching is hard work, poorly paid, subject to poor class behaviour and generally unsupported by government and the broader community. And this comes from how *teachers* write about themselves – in social media and elsewhere.

Luckily it did not stop me. I have loved every minute of being in school so far. Yes, the pay is not competitive – particularly for STEM subjects. But the other areas are a bit more subjective, and will depend on previous experiences and the school in which you are working. I worked evenings before, and I am doing that a bit now too – but, I am normally home by 4pm and see my kids every day. My working day is also much more rewarding.

I have been fortunate to meet a lot of very good teachers in my first eight weeks: at my home school; on school visits; and at the first Maths Teacher Training Scholarship event. They are all so inspiring, and motivate me daily to be the best teacher I can be. If I do that, I know I will never regret this career change.

Russell Brooks AMIMA

Maths Teacher Training Scholar