

## A Day in the life of a Deputy Head teacher

I am the Deputy Head teacher at Henry Fawcett Primary School in Kennington. We are statistically the most deprived school in Lambeth, which is itself a very deprived borough. We have two classes in each year group from nursery up to top juniors. The Head, James Walker, is the best head I've ever worked for - not perfect - but the best so far!! My role in the school is very varied. I deputise for James when he's not there, I have responsibility for the curriculum and also all the Special Educational Needs provision (including our 7 autistic children). I'm also the mentor for all newly qualified teachers we get, and also the school based tutor for all students we take from Goldsmith's College. My time is split between these jobs, so I decided to tell you about one specific day.....

### Friday 9th January 2004



**7.15am** Left the house to beat the traffic. I leave this early because I'd rather get to school early and do some work than be sitting in the car for an hour with Jono and Erica from Heart FM! I got in at around **7.50am** and went to the main office to have a cup of tea with Barbara (our admin officer). The three most important groups of people in a school are the office staff, the premises staff and the cleaners. Get it sorted with them, and your life is a breeze. Ours are fantastic.

**8.15am** on Fridays is the diary meeting. That is the head, me, Barbara and Phyllis from the office and John the premises officer. This is checking events for the coming week, does John need to move chairs, make car parking spaces, unlock certain doors, help with certain equipment? Also courses and teachers' time out of their classes for training, monitoring..etc are the supply teachers booked? (In our experience, the earlier you book 'em, the better they are!)

By **8.45am** we're in the daily full staff briefing. This morning's was both sombre and silly. Naseem, one of our teachers had a baby girl last year after a very difficult pregnancy and a near death experience. And over the past few months a number of staff have lost family and friends. Naseem had brought in sweets and chocolates for us all to celebrate her daughter's first birthday, and moved some of us to tears as she reminded us of how precious life is and how grateful she is to be here and how many of life's problems are really very insignificant when compared with the value of life. Then I had to follow this by asking who had the Sikhism resource box as it had disappeared from the resources room. And when pressed by staff I had to describe some of the contents. Well the five symbols of Sikhism are a knife, a bangle, a comb, grown hair and shorts worn as pants. So I'm there asking who's seen a pair of pants and a starched turban!

After the briefing I was caught (as always) by two parents. Marcia was anxious to know why her son hadn't been chosen for extra maths lessons, as he'd put his hand up for it when asked. I had not a clue what she meant, but I promised to find out. And Naomi, one of our foster mums who looks after 3 girls for child protection. She had some instances of behaviour to report from home in case the children display the same at school. Very sad. Thank God for

people like Naomi. She finds the 3 children very hard work, but she says that if she gives them back to social services they'll most likely be split up, and if they grow up together then if nothing else they've got each other.

**9.15am** I'm in the Special Needs office, chasing reviews of children's progress from the end of last term, and updating the records on the computer data system.



Then at **10.00am** it was hot foot up two floors to the top hall for my assembly - junior singing. They say dogs behave like their owners - well these children sing like their teacher behaves! Loudly, and with gusto!!! We learned a new song, a round, about a fairground. Their favourite line was "Roll up and try for a coconut, \* hot dog, \* score a bulls eye" and that was only because they were allowed to clap where the asterisk was! The children went out to play after that and I had to keep

Liam behind for making no effort whatsoever. He said singing was for girls, and when I reminded him how many men were in Pop Idol, he replied "Yeh, but they didn't win though!". He had a point. I must think up a new argument!

Back to the sauna office after playtime (the radiator dial has been painted over so it only gives out one heat - very hot!) and a phone call to the Pupil Referral Unit to our Behaviour Specialist Teacher to discuss which groups she'll work with when she resumes support for kids with behaviour difficulties next week. I also collected her reports last half term from the fax and filed those. (I do my own filing) Then I had a quick look on the Times Educational Supplement website for any headships going. I must be mad..... Rang up for a few information packs, and then Stephen (8 years old) arrived for me to test his sight vocabulary. His target from last term was to be able to read 100 words from the infant list and spell 60. Well he read 114, but only spelt 54 correctly, but he was praised and sent off with a sticker, a smile, and a new target for his teacher to work with him on.

After Stephen I was expecting Jemima as she was new last term and her teacher has concerns, I was going to do a screening assessment on her to see where her problems lay and what specifically they are. But before I could, Rhea and Alex knocked on the door. They had their class behaviour book in their hand and grimaces on their faces. "Oh dear" I thought. "Oh dear" I said. The book from their teacher told me they had had a fight in the line coming back from PE. After telling them that I didn't consider there to be any good reason for fighting, I asked if they had a good reason. (They never get it!) "Yes", says Alex, "She pushed me in the girl's toilet and wouldn't let me out!". His face looked so indignant, I wanted to wet myself laughing! But no, on came my stern face (that can stop a pupil at 15 metres!) and they both got a talking to and detention at lunchtime. Off they went. Jemima arrived; she did quite well, has a problem with consonant-vowel digraphs, silent letters and doesn't know any number bonds past 10.

**12.30pm** Lunch and I'm in detention again (the Head's gone to his gym). We take it in turns to be around over lunchtimes so the other person can go off and have a real break if they want. Rhea and Alex are there and so is Jay who has wound his teacher up on purpose and thinks it's funny. I don't and neither does he by the time I've finished! Then I get called by the main office to see the pest controller who has arrived to get rid of our cockroaches in the infant kitchen. So I show him the kitchen, shut the door on him and run away! A quick bite to eat while I update the staff development board in the staff work room with all the new training and courses that have come in for this term.

Then our **1.30pm** meeting is delayed as the consultant is running late, so Phyllis, the finance officer and I chatted about our Christmases. **1.45pm** and the head and I are in a "Primary Leadership Programme" meeting with Cherry, our consultant head from another school. The programme is going to be in all schools over the next few years as an improvement and self-review strategy, but we've been part of the first wave. Next Thursday the DfES are coming to make a training video using our school, me, James, Cherry and some other senior managers. This meeting was for us to get our stories straight! No, we've decided that if we don't know what we should say, we'll ask the DfES regional director who will be there what he thinks we should say!



**3.00pm** and I had to cover Jo's middle infant class for their story time while Jo and Gulcan, her partner teacher, met with parents about the Early Literacy Strategy which is a programme designed to catch those children who slip through the net and teaches them the basics they've missed before it's too late. There's another programme for lower juniors and another for upper juniors. So class 1C and I had a fun story time, sang "Aunty Monica" with actions and then they all went home. I normally run singing club on a Friday after school but as it's the first week back, it wasn't on today.



I realised by **3.30pm** that I hadn't been to the loo all day, that I hadn't really seen my pals much, and that I hadn't finished putting the courses up on the board. So I finished that, wished my pals a happy weekend (they're going to see Justin Timberlake this evening!) went to the loo and came home. I've now had my dinner, my brother's popped in for a cup of tea, I've spoken to my boyfriend, and I'm off to Holmes Place for a swim.

*Kate Gilmore*

(ed. And then she wrote the article, which I received at 8pm on Jan 9<sup>th</sup>!)