

Henna Javed and Sam Fairbairn, a PGCE Art and Design experience

Hello I'm Sam and I'm Henna and we are both training with Northumbria University on the PGCE Art, Craft and Design course.

Sam – I'm from Newcastle and studied at Sunderland University between 2009-2011. I studied Graphic Communication and Design and developed a passion for editorial design and photography inspired by architecture. By joining the course I have found a love for printmaking which has developed my own practice. Making the links between different subject areas and developed a cross-curricular approach has influenced my teaching style.

Henna – I'm also from Newcastle. I graduated from Northumbria University with a BA in Fine Art in 2013. I'm a textiles specialist driven by investigating properties of materials and how they can be manipulated to produce interesting works of art. My practice was informed by the visuals you see in the world linking culture and the environment around us. Whilst being on the course I have really developed my knowledge of ceramics, which I love. With ceramics I have explored this material and shown off to the students. Witnessing student's eyes light up when work comes out of the kiln is rewarding as a teacher.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER AND WHY ART AND DESIGN?

Sam – Art for me has been something that has been so important to my core identify. I would draw local architecture with my granddad every weekend where he would show me how to use pencils in a way I had never before. It's helped me to grow as an individual and has helped shaped my life in a positive way. Without the drive and determination I have for my subject I don't know where I would be. I want students to feel passionate about the world in a visual and creative way the way I have and not to limit themselves of their capabilities. I have teachers within my family that have advised me on how difficult the profession can be but that still hasn't changed the way I feel about teaching. Working with young people and developing their knowledge along with my own can be satisfying. Everyday is different and that's why I want to teach.

Henna – Experiencing working with young people in my previous work places and helping them develop their skills has encouraged me to make the decision to go into teaching. I've received a mixture of opinions on going into this profession but Art and design has really helped me develop my confidence and this is a key step in any individual's education. This drives my practice and I want students to be aware and be open to the world, we live in a constantly changing and growing environment. Art equips young people with skills such as developing their confidence which is paramount to making them happy and healthy individuals and gives them a good start to their future. I get a really good feeling when I have posed a question or get a student to work on something that intrigues them.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A TRAINEE ART AND DESIGN TEACHER?

Sam – The course has exceeded my expectations. Prior to starting I envisioned the course to deepen my knowledge in both skills and teaching everyday. I am learning a new skill and developing my own practice constantly. The course has opened my eyes to different styles of design and pedagogies. I expected the workload to be challenging and intense but this is going to make me a better teacher in the long run. My organisation skills have really helped me keep up with the on going planning, reflecting and improving of my lessons. The greatest challenge for me during my teacher training has been building up the confidence to manage behaviour and ensure progress within the lesson. We as a cohort have found that being a teacher can effect your confident. A good week could then be taken away by one lesson that hasn't gone to plan.

Henna – Whereas I've struggled with my organisation skills but both my placement school have advised and have suggested ways in coping with this and I'm amazed at how welcoming the schools have been towards me. In fact it has been my greatest challenge during my teacher training. My greatest strength is developing a positive atmosphere within my lessons, which is inclusive and encouraging for students. It has also been remarked by teachers within the department that alongside this positive atmosphere I also have high expectations. It's astounding that even though these teachers have a massive workload already they still find the time to check on my wellbeing. Making sure the workload is manageable and that I'm coping with everything teaching has to offer.

Sam – The contact time each week in my placements schools has been beneficial to my learning. The way my mentors and other members of the department have supported me and given me the responsibility to reflect and improve my teaching has been second to none. My subject mentors have been crucial to developing my subject knowledge and application within a teaching setting. When one of my lessons isn't going to plan I know that I have the support and understanding from my mentor and know that they will offer solutions to my issues within my planning. Being given a professional mentor helps to make a contact with the wider school they help develop our teaching styles, behaviour management and planning skills. We are privileged to have a yearly timetable set out to support both our teaching and wellbeing.

Henna – Within this timetable we have allocated sessions at BALTIC centre of contemporary art where we get to network and work alongside regional contemporary artists in workshops that inspire lessons to teach our students. Our Friday session gives us valuable time to catch up with our cohort. We feedback our experiences during the week and support each other through challenging moments we have as teachers. One being the view of what others perceive of the Arts, some feel that the arts have no place in the world today and within the education of young people. This is a wild accusation considering the benefits around taking an Art course can reflect on what you learn but how you learn as human being.

CONCLUSION

Sam – Despite the negativity around Art education I wouldn't change my mind on wanting to become a practicing art teacher. Even though the job market isn't looking as healthy as I would like it to in the North East I know that I will get my dream job if I keep my positive thinking. Art teaching is a profession that offers job satisfaction and gives us the opportunity to practice as an artist alongside inspiring young individuals of today. I want to be an art teacher to inspire and motivate individuals to achieve their full potential. After working as a teacher for a few years my next step would be working with students with Special Education Needs to help them achieve their full potential. This has arisen from teaching a class of students with individual needs. This has been a huge challenge but one I would want to continue within the future.

Henna – I want to work in a department that is open to exploring different processes and expanding student's horizons. Equipping them with anything they need to develop their knowledge and skills to take that next step in their life, whether that be art school, formal university education, apprenticeships or beyond formal education, because art is known and has been shown to help promote mental awareness and wellbeing. I would like to develop my knowledge and skills to go onto university academic education to further my subject knowledge and nothing is going to stand in my way.