

# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



**T**ony Clayton, Deputy Headteacher at Hensingham Primary School, has worked for CET for almost two years. We caught up with Tony to find out more about his role and how he makes the most of collaborating across the Trust.

## **Hi Tony, tell us a bit about yourself.**

I have lived in Cumbria my whole life and absolutely love it! I live in a small village between the Solway Coast and the Lake District National Park, and I have the best of everything I like – living in peace and quiet, having the beach within a couple of miles of home and my beloved fells and lakes within touching distance.

I have always wanted to teach for as long as I remember, so to be able to train and graduate as a teacher at St. Martin's College when I left secondary school and be able to teach in Cumbria is just perfect.

Outside of school, you will almost always find me climbing the fells of the Lake District, taking in the stunning views and tranquility our county has to offer.

## **Tell us about your role within CET.**

In 2023, I started with CET as Deputy Headteacher at Caldew Lea Primary School, based in Carlisle. In the short time I have been with CET, my role continues to evolve and I am currently coming to the end of a very successful and enjoyable secondment at Hensingham Primary School.

I am very much looking forward to what the future holds in CET and playing a small part in the success of the Trust, as we grow larger and stronger together.

## **You have worked at a number of schools in the Trust. What do you enjoy most about this?**

As I approach the end of my second year, I have already worked in two schools as Deputy Headteacher and have been part of many Collaborative Working Groups.

What I enjoy most is working as a collective to continually drive school improvement to improve the life chances and experiences of our pupils across the Trust. I enjoy working with colleagues from across the Trust, each with their own areas of expertise and skills – bringing together all that knowledge and experience to improve our schools is exciting.

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As an Specialist Leader in Education (SLE), I value the opportunity the Trust has given me to utilise those skills. I particularly love the challenge of helping to improve a school as rapidly as possible, knowing that our friends from Ofsted can call at any moment!

## **What is your favourite part of your job?**

Undoubtedly, my favourite part of my

job is supporting our pupils to achieve and succeed. I have spent all of my career in schools facing considerable challenges and disadvantage, and I really couldn't see myself working in any other type of school. Supporting families and the wider community is something else that I really enjoy, as well as having the opportunity to work in more than one school.

## **What is the most important lesson you have learnt working in education?**

The most important lesson I have learned in education is to never stand still and to continually strive to move forward.

## **What are you most passionate about throughout your work in education?**

I am most passionate about broadening the horizons, increasing the amount of experiences and opening up a world of possibilities for our most disadvantaged pupils. As much as I recognise that outcomes in reading, writing and maths are important, actually for a lot of our pupils in CET, having a nurturing and supportive start to their young lives, with a curriculum focused on personal development and cultural capital, is what I believe is really important. This is what gets our pupils wanting to come to school, excited to learn and to try new things, opening their eyes to the world that is often not what they experience in their everyday lives at home – that is what drives me.

## What challenges have you faced in your career?

Since starting teaching in 2006, the biggest challenge I have faced has been the financial commitment to schools and education from the government. As the demands of teaching have increased, so have the demands on schools and school leaders to provide even more pastoral support to pupils, young people and their families.

I do not always think that the people making decisions on schools and education fully understand what it is like day in, day out on the ground. The legacy of COVID is increasing those demands and the ways schools are facing up to these challenges is nothing short of remarkable.

## What two things are you most proud of; one professional and one personal?

Professionally, what I am most proud of is achieving Literacy School of the Year in 2014 in my previous school. Considering the significantly low starting points in terms of speech, language, and communication - to achieve that award within a few years of me leading English for the school was most pleasing. That led to the school being awarded the Golden Apple Primary School of the Year award.

Personally, alongside being able to do my dream job for a living, I am most proud of completing the 214 Wainwrights (solo!) in under nine months.

I set myself the challenge, despite everyone around me thinking I was insane (I was almost a complete novice to hiking) but I decided to do it anyway! I spent most weekends, most school holidays and all light evenings up the fells, some of them in heavy snow and some of them in complete darkness, as well as fitting work around it too. What an incredible experience though.

## What is something surprising about you that not many people know?

Not many people know that I am a classically trained pianist and completed my grades. Also, as much as I love working in schools, some very large ones too, I am not actually someone who loves big crowds and lots of people! I think that is why I enjoy spending a lot of my free time up a mountain!

## If you were Prime Minister for a day, what rule would you put in place?

If I was Prime Minister for a day, I would make all school meals for children completely free and I would abolish car parking fees in town and city centres. I hate having to pay for parking, but it would also help local small businesses too.

**It was great catching up with you Tony!**

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