

Chapter 5

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Chapter 5

Key points

- Make a good first impression by being punctual, appropriately dressed and enthusiastic.
- Observe carefully and learn as much as you can about the routines and practices.
- Be aware and sensitive to situations and respond appropriately.
- You are a guest in the school or setting, so find out about and respect staffroom or shared area practice.
- Actively listen and act upon advice you are given.

Chapter 5

Case Study

Case Study: Carolyn – Art Gallery

After initially observing and examining what the gallery already had in place, I began to see the potential for using my own teaching expertise to adapt some of the existing workshops. I planned my own re-vamped sessions using the same resources in different ways. I gained the permission of the education officer to deliver these re-vamped sessions to visiting school groups. The first session I planned and delivered was called the Portraits session, aimed at a group of Key Stage 1 children.

It would have been much easier for Carolyn to do what she was asked and no more. However, she wanted to make the most of her placement and by using her initiative she opened up new possibilities and her placement was hugely successful.

Case Study

Student A was on a placement and formed negative views about the school and its resources. She did not keep these views to herself and was overheard at lunch time, while waiting in the local shop for a sandwich, complaining to a friend about the school. Unfortunately for her, another member of staff was also in the shop at the time and reported the conversation to the head teacher. Needless to say news about this spread quickly throughout the staff and student A had no chance of being accepted as a colleague. She was fortunate that the head teacher allowed her to complete her placement. You need to be aware of what is accepted behaviour in the staffroom.

Case Study

Student B caused offence in his school by swearing. This upset several members of staff, and his training provider was informed when the swearing happened on the second occasion. He was given a warning by his tutor not to swear in the staffroom but he did not heed the warning, and on the next occasion the school asked him to leave. He only

had himself to blame, and if he had behaved responsibly, the school would have been happy to support him.

Case Study

Student C caused concern in a staff room by spending almost all of her time, using her mobile phone. She was not at all sociable and everyone else had to listen to her conversations. They felt strongly that she was abusing the privilege of being allowed in the staff room. If you need to make a telephone call at lunchtime, go somewhere private to do so. With all of these potential problems, you might think it would be safer not to go into the staffroom but that is certainly not the answer.

Case Study

Student D was shy and felt uncomfortable going into the staff room. She decided it was easier to eat her lunch in the classroom and spend the rest of the time preparing for the next lesson. When asked by her teacher, she said she had a lot of things to get ready. Other teachers noticed and it was reported to her University tutor. The tutor spoke with Student D and pointed out that one section of the QTS Standards is about 'Communicating and working with others'. It is impossible to meet those Standards if you isolate yourself from colleagues. In most schools or settings, teachers expect you to go into the staffroom and to be sociable. They will be happy for you to be there as long as you use your common sense and behave appropriately.

Case Study

Student D arrived at her school at just after 8 a.m. every morning, which was very commendable. However, she went straight to the staffroom and sat drinking coffee for most of the time before school started which was not at all the routine of the staff, and was not received well.

Chapter 5

Observation Checklist

Beginning your Placement

- Do the teachers and other staff appear to enjoy their work?
- How do teachers speak and behave towards each other?
- How do the teachers speak and behave towards the children?
- How do the children speak and behave towards each other?
- How do the children speak and behave towards the teachers and other adults?
- How do the teachers speak and behave towards non-teaching staff?
- How do non-teaching staff speak and behave towards the teachers?
- What do the displays tell you about how the school environment is valued?
- What do the displays tell you about how children's work is valued?
- Is the school welcoming for parents?

Practitioner Habits

- What do teachers do when the bell goes at the start of school? Watch carefully the procedure for bringing children into the classroom.
- Do teachers stay in the hall for collective worship?
- If not, are they expected to do anything particular?
- What is the procedure at break times and lunchtimes?

In the Classroom

- Organization of room and resources: Take note of the layout of the room, how the tables and chairs are arranged. Look carefully where resources are stored. Is there a carpet area? Where is the whiteboard situated? Is there a sink for art activities? How many display boards are there? The answers to each of these questions will help you when you start your planning.
- Class/year group/ability/number of children: Your teacher will probably provide you with a class list and details of the abilities of the children. It is worth finding out about how the children are grouped and whether any of the children have special educational needs. On an alternative placement it may be a different group of children each day so you may not be able to discover much information in advance
- Behaviour management strategies: whatever type of placement you are on, behaviour management will be an issue. Watch carefully how the teachers gain attention. Children like routines so it is always a good idea to continue the routines they are used to. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
- Rewards and sanctions: notice how the teacher uses rewards and sanctions; and positive reinforcement.
- Roles of other adults: notice how many other adults are involved working with your class and what their roles are.
- Introductions: your teacher will probably have a normal routine for introducing lessons.
- Transitions: be aware of how transitions from one activity to another are managed.
- Conclusions/Plenary: just as with the introduction to lessons, your teacher probably has a routine for concluding lessons. This will not just be about tidying up, even though that it is very important. It will also be about reviewing the learning.