

## EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS



**NAME: OLIVIA CATE-FREYNE**

**T Level:**

Education and Early Years

**College attended:**

Cardinal Newman College

**Destination:**

BA (Hons) Primary Education, University of the West of England

**Why did you choose to do a T Level qualification?**

I thought it was more relevant - when I spoke to teachers they said one of the main things about T Levels is the industry placement and experience you gain on the course. As I wanted to go on to primary teaching, the course felt like a great fit for me.

**What topics did you learn during your T Level?**

One of the main topics was teaching pedagogies - we were producing lesson plans all the time during the course and this helped us approach them. Safeguarding is an important one as well - the legislation is very relevant and I'm now learning more about it at university.

The way our class room was set up really helped. It was laid out as a school/nursery so when we were in the classroom, it felt like a real working environment. For example, we produced an Education Health & Care Plan for a child in school, then devised a role play based on this. So, even when we weren't in schools, we could simulate those situations.

**How did your teachers support you on your T Level?**

The biggest thing to say is that our college teachers either had been primary teachers or worked in early years before teaching at the college, so they were able to draw upon their own experiences which was really valuable.

**Where was your industry placement and what type of duties did you perform?**

We could choose a nursery or a primary school. A school was more relevant for me as I wanted to be a primary school teacher. At the start, we were shadowing and supporting, with teacher mentors who helped us a lot. This was really good to see how a primary school works.

In the second year we took on more responsibilities. We planned and delivered activities with the children based upon our objectives. We took groups outside of the classroom and helped on the playground or at lunch, which made me feel more like an actual teacher. I was also lucky enough to experience a school trip and all the planning that went into that, such as risk assessments and safeguarding procedures while out of school.



### What were the highlights from your industry placement?

The main highlight was the relationship I built with the staff and seeing how the two reception teachers supported one another. They did all their planning together and bounced ideas off each other. I would really like to teach in a school that has two entry years now I've seen how effective a good working relationship can be.

I was also involved with the child assessment process. The year one pupils were doing a phonics screening test. I watched how the teacher did it first and then I got to take individual children for their assessment, feeling like a part of the team was great.

Another highlight was expanding on the theory and subject knowledge that I had learnt. Seeing children being taught phonics, for example, helps solidify your subject knowledge. I recently studied phonics during my university course so having that experience has really helped me.

### Has the T Level prepared you well for your next career step?

Yes, everything was so relevant, all the topics and even the assessments. At my interview for university, they asked me what interested me in teaching. Having knowledge from college helped me talk about safeguarding in depth, in a way that I don't think would be easy for others who had not done the T Level.

### Why did you decide on university as your next career step?

It is one of the most known ways of getting into teaching, and I have always wanted to go to university too. The courses are a similar structure to the T Level, learning in the classroom and then going on industry placement, using the learning in a working environment. The T Level reinforced that it was what I wanted to do, because I already had that experience in the classroom.

### How much of an influence do you think your T Level had getting you to your next career step (university)?

In the interview for university, I explained that I had done 750 hours of industry placement in a school and the different assessments that we had to do for our T Level. The feedback was that I really stood out from other candidates. Also, when writing my personal statement, I had so much experience and knowledge that was relevant to the course.

### Do you think the T Level prepared you for your degree?

In terms of content and placement, definitely. I am now building on that at university. We have learned more about safeguarding at university and done further training. Also, we have another placement to do and I am really looking forward to that.

### What do your parents think about your T Level qualification now you have completed it?

My parents said it's the best option I could have chosen. I went to the open day with my mum and she thought it was perfect. Whereas my grandma, who had never heard of a T Level before, was like, 'how do you know if the T Level is going to be good?' And honestly I didn't know at the time, but it's worked out really well and I would definitely recommend it to other students.

### What advice would you give to a student who is about to start a T Level?

Engage with all the tasks in your course, including your industry placement objectives. The more responsibility you take on in your T Level and the more you engage with, the better your experience.

