

A Teacher's Heart in the Community

Posted on 12:00pm Monday 14th Sep 2020

I work as a Nursery Practitioner at Bevendean Primary school providing free education to children aged 3-4 years. The school is large, but undersubscribed, allowing us to have classes of up to 30 children. Our awareness of the virus began slowly – first of all being aware of cases in China, then Spain, then France. Soon we were all aware as a member of staff had had potential contact with the virus and due to a lack of central guidance for managers, the school made the decision to close for 1 day while they waited for advice from public health England at the beginning of March.

We reopened briefly in mid-March, before closing as lockdown descended. Like many schools we still were open to children of key workers and vulnerable families. We used our staff 'snow leads' system to manage the situation, which was a funny title when we had all the heatwaves! I've been really impressed with the level of planning our managers have put in place.



I've seen how differently people react to Covid-19: some people are really cautious and have kept their children out of school, others are not worried, but didn't want their kids going to school while others were off. As a result, we've had as few as 3 children to care for on some days and at most only 7 kids. I'm looking forward to returning to work in September but am not sure how many kids we'll have as registrations have been very low so far.

Personally, I've had to reduce my working days and been redeployed across the school. We have a minimum number of staff working with kids, so I'm always working with other colleagues and under lockdown I ended up working with people I'd not regularly worked with before. With my extra time outside of work, I found myself feeling strongly that I needed to do something and reconnect with my community. I was aware of other people working harder and doing longer shifts than they had been before lockdown and I did feel guilty sometimes.

I considered using my prior nursing experience, but the NHS was inundated with volunteers. So, just 2 days after lockdown I was volunteering for my local pub, The Bevy, helping them deliver their 'meals on wheels' to local people who could no longer come to the pub for their community group days. I also helped out at the

school with providing free school dinners for kids and collecting food from depots and driving it to outlets. Plus, at home we've had the usual 'open door' policy for waifs and strays, so I've been as busy as usual in different ways.

I've been walking and gardening and there's been a real holiday-feel during the crisis, despite all the cancelled events in my diary, and I have sometimes felt like I'm treading water and that the situation is unreal and dreamlike. There seemed to be a lot of positive change and possibility coming out of the situation and although I am hopeful, I do feel suspicious about laws and regulations coming in which could affect the bigger picture long term. I do feel that I've learnt to be more aware of others' perspectives about how they react to the virus and to be inclusive and not judge. After all, we need to look after each other.

By Brig, August 2020