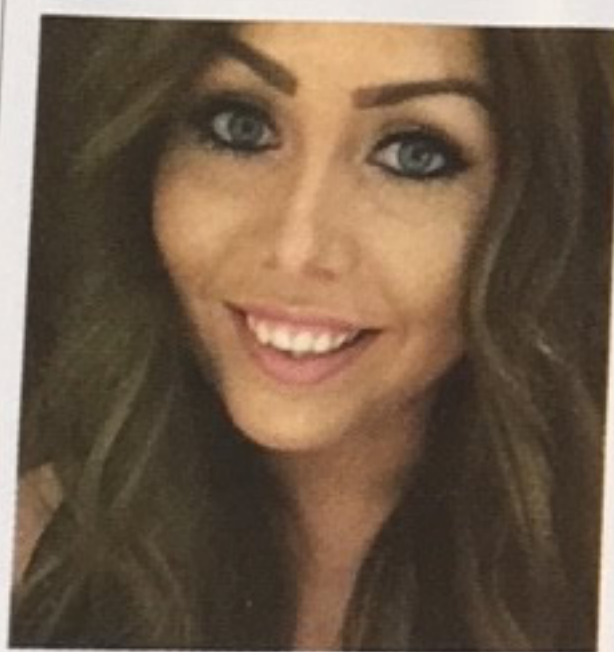


A day in the life of...



Natalie Lodge

This special educational needs teacher has pride in her work – and pride in the group of students she teaches

I AM NOT just a teacher; I'm a counsellor, agony aunt, sometimes a comedian, but mostly a positive role model. Being a positive role model is just as important as the education we provide. For our school is unlike others.

The 15 pupils we support at Independent Educational Services range from those with social, emotional and mental health issues such as autism and ADHD, to students who have been refused a mainstream education owing to behavioural difficulties.

I am an associate teacher and centre manager and find working in a special educational needs school challenging and rewarding. Each day brings something new.

I arrive at school each day at around 8:15am. Shortly after, the rest of our staff arrive for our morning meeting to discuss the day's activities, update one another on students and distribute the daily budget. As our pupils partake in a lot of off-site activities, we give an allowance to each teacher for the day.

A typical day starts with the students arriving via taxis. Our school is based in Nuneaton, but our students come from six different local authorities, meaning that some students travel over an hour to reach us each

day. Upon arrival, the students typically study English and maths, as we find that they are more focused first thing. During the afternoon, many students take part in offsite activities such as swimming, equine therapy and social skills through play.

We also offer the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) to our students, enabling them to complete courses in subjects such as hair and beauty and animal studies. Some students aren't ready to be in a school environment, owing gaps in education prior to being at IES or early childhood trauma, so are educated offsite. We use local amenities such as libraries and museums to build up both their social skills and learning. One teacher took a pupil to a car garage for his maths lesson so that he could practice his hundredths, tenths and units by reading the prices of the cars. This worked so well and the student really got a lot out of it. For many of our pupils, libraries are a good place for them to work as it is a quiet place with few distractions. Museums are also a great visual source of information for our young people.

We teach on a one-to-one or two-to-one basis. I know each of my students inside out;

I could tell you their favourite colour, their likes and dislikes. With this in-depth knowledge, we can tailor lessons. Bespoke differentiation allows us to give our young people something that they may not have experienced for a long time: educational stability.

We have to be there to listen to our young people when they have no one else to turn to. I could not think of a more rewarding job. Seeing the young people I work with achieve milestones fills me with pride.

For many students at IES, remaining in school for the whole day is a big deal, and for each of my students who do that, I feel pride. I am proud of everything each of them achieves and I am proud of my staff, who go above and beyond to make every day count. I love what I do; I love to teach. ●

Your day

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