

When did you decide to be a teacher?

I began playing 'schools' from a very young age and remember doing registers for all my teddies and sitting them in a circle, singing songs with them. I think from that pre-school age, my destiny was set! As a teenager, I helped at after school clubs, led horses at my local stables on Saturdays, helped at the Sunday School and worked at Drusilla's Zoo Park all of which compounded my love of inspiring and engaging young learners.

What was teacher training like?

I did my four-year Bachelor of Education degree in Brighton, specialising in English, and lived at home during my university years whilst working in the holidays to save money. My own children have had a far more adventurous experience of university that has certainly given them a taste of survival and freedom that I didn't have at the time.

What was the first school you taught at?

I have taught in a variety of schools; I started my career in a two-form entry town school where I was the EYFS teacher for 3 years, which I loved. Then I moved to a village school, similar in many ways to Bolney, where I taught all year groups during my time there and where I also taught each of my three children, who attended. I was lucky enough to be able to see all their wow primary school moments and remember how it was quite amusing because when I taught them, my eldest called me 'Mrs Lofthouse', my youngest said 'mummy' whilst my daughter, who is my middle child, refused to call me by any name for a whole school year! Most recently, I was the deputy head teacher and year 6 teacher of a one-form entry large village school on the edge of Ashdown Forest, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Did you always want to be a head teacher?

I have always loved teaching and was very aware that in moving up the leadership ladder, you inevitably spend less time in the classroom, which worried me initially. However, having worked with inspirational heads in the past, I realised the difference you can still make to the lives and learning of young people through leading a school makes it worth the leap.

What was your first impression of Bolney School?

I imagine that like anyone driving up the school lane for the first time, the beauty of such an idyllic location blew me away. The church, school and cricket pitch view was just picture perfect and when I was welcomed into the school, the warmth continued. As corny as it may sound, straight away, it felt like the school that I have been waiting for!

What was the interview process like?

The two-day interview process was rigorous and rather daunting as you might imagine, but it was also a privilege to meet the children and staff and see them clearly demonstrating the school values. The school council interviewed me, which I really enjoyed, as their questions were honest and probing, I led an assembly and presented to the Governors along with a variety of other tasks. Throughout the two days, I really felt at home at Bolney and was so delighted that the school felt that connection with me too.

How does Bolney differ to other schools you have taught at?

Bolney shares the same values as my previous school, which was part of the draw here and it reminds me of the school where I taught my own children – another reason why I felt so at home so quickly. Having said that, I know that even when schools have similarities they are also unique and special due to the specific children, staff and families connected to them.

Do you intend on teaching at Bolney or is your role more managerial?

My passion in education is about making a difference to the children in my school – engaging them in irresistible learning through an enriched curriculum, rich texts and exciting opportunities in and around the school. I believe in the importance of using the outdoor environment as an extension of the classroom and finding out what inspires the children. Even though my role will of course be strategic and managerial, I intend to be with the children as much as I can – after all, they are the heart of the school.

What do you think of Bolney Village? Do you intend on moving to Bolney?

I am yet to explore all that Bolney Village has to offer but I know from talking to staff and children what a special place it is and I am looking forward to making links within the community. I currently have a 35-minute commute which I enjoy although I have heard that there are some great dog walks in the area which I know my 3 year old cocker spaniel, Piglet, would love so...never say never!

What are your plans for the school?

I have spent my first 3 weeks at school getting to know the pupils, staff and parents and school systems and processes in order that I fully understand where the school is at and what the stakeholders value the most. As you can imagine, I have many ideas and will be working with staff, families and governors to build on all the positive elements of the school to make Bolney Primary the best that it can be, guided by God.