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Danny's job log: 6

Written by Danny Smith, February 2011

Danny Smith is a Fine Art graduate. He has a job as a teaching assistant, an unquenchable thirst and a fledgling freelance career.

We need to talk. Look, things haven't been working out recently and, well, I think we should split up. We both knew this was coming. It's not you, it's me.

That's right, this is my last blog post. And yes, an individual entry in a blog is called a 'post' not a 'blog'.

I'm still temping and as I seem to be pretty successful at it so far, even though the irregular pay is constantly keeping me on the financial back foot and the lack of any real adult interaction is causing me to copy the behaviour of the children I work with who are severely autistic.

So here is a bunch of tips for being a successful cover TA for special schools. A niche list granted, but you may be able to apply some or all of these to your own job. And if not, well, tough. It's my last blog post.

- Agency staff are insane. When they call at seven in the morning they know that they've woke you up and try and bring you round with a hysterically upbeat voice that is somewhere between 'gun to the head hostage' and nervous breakdown quiz show host. ☐
- Treat everyone nicely, Schools will specifically ask for you back if you're good, or ask for someone else if you're terrible.
- Of all the people to treat nicely turn on the extra charm for the office staff. These people control the school, know where everything is and can mean the difference between having your time sheet signed or lost in a bin.
- Be ready for the next day, pack a lunch, have your bus fare and drink exactly the right amount the night before so your hangover is perfectly balanced for the next days work.
- The kids may not like you as you're new and most hate new things. They don't care how much you want them to like you, know magic tricks or bribe them with biscuits. Don't take it personally and move away if they start to build to a point of crisis.
- If there is anything you can't do, don't know how to do, or won't do because it's too gross, you may be in the wrong job. But tell the staff you're with and offer to do something else instead. 'I'm not comfortable changing this boy, do you want me to wash up instead?' is far better than 'WHY WILL HE NOT STOP BITING ME!? NAPPIES MAKE ME SICK'.



I've said this before but it bears repeating, you can never go wrong if you care about the kids. The secret of the job is: No matter how much you hate getting up in the morning, talking to insanely cheerful agency staff, and generally dragging yourself through a routine which is pretty similar whatever school you're sent to, the kids are worth it, you will be charmed, your heart will melt and your mammal brain, programmed to care, will not see you far wrong.

I've been Danny Smith. <http://www.edgetrinkets.com>

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