

Ian Tett

Headteacher – Oakgrove School

How long have you worked in Milton Keynes?

I've been here nine and a half years now. I originally started in September 2005 as part of the small set up team that developed Oakgrove. We originally had two year groups, Year 7 and Year 8 and roughly 145 students in each year group.

I live in Northampton and worked there before and there was limited opportunity for growth in that town. There was something so exciting about Milton Keynes.



What brought you to Milton Keynes?

The opportunities. It's a fast growing city, somewhere that I had studied as a geographer when I was at university in Leicester. As someone who had only been teaching four years before I came to Oakgrove, for me MK offered that element of excitement and challenge that other areas didn't. The opportunity to work in a new school was really attractive, to set up new systems, the ethos of the school and to add your own impact.

The school I was at previously was nice, but the actual fabric of the buildings were struggling, the resources weren't great, so to come here and have brand new resources, the latest audio visual equipment and start with a clean slate, was fantastic. It meant you could create something organic from scratch.

How has Milton Keynes enabled you to develop your career?

I originally started my career in Northampton as a geography teacher, moving on to geography subject leader and then humanities subject leader. After only three years I was running a department of 16 staff.

Part of the reason I wanted to work in Milton Keynes is that Oakgrove was (and still is) a growing school and I knew there would be promotion opportunities within the school. This gives you the chance to really demonstrate the skills you've got and show what you can do. That way you're in a strong position if something comes up. As a geographer I was very aware that it is one of the fastest growing urban areas in Europe, and for me strategically, I identified that if I want to grow my career quite quickly it would be logical to get to somewhere with a clear growth point.

Since coming to Milton Keynes my career has effectively grown parallel to Oakgrove School. In my time here I have successfully passed the Advanced Skills Teacher status (AST) and was awarded Chartered Geographer (Teacher) status from the Royal Geographical Society. Through the AST role, I did a lot to develop the school's specialist humanities status as Director of Humanities/Assistant Headteacher. I have able to do some outreach work for geography with other local secondary schools, and in addition I set up the Primary Humanities Network Meetings so creating a bit of a humanities hub here.

Next came a completely different move which saw me take on the Deputy Headship for Behaviour, Care Guidance and Support. I completed that role with aspects of teaching and learning for nearly six years before taking up the headship.

I have also been fortunate enough to complete the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH), and the Professional Qualification of School Inspectors (PQSI), so I'm currently an Additional Inspector for Ofsted. This gives me a great opportunity to how other

schools work both locally and nationally. I am just about to do the early years/primary inspection training as well in reflection that Oakgrove be opening a primary school on our site in September 2016.

The other benefit of working here is the connections I have made. We're a small authority with only 12 secondary schools and certainly since coming into the headship in September I've started to make really strong links with other heads. That's been really useful to act as a sounding board and to get ideas.

There's a lot of partnership working that I'm not sure you get anywhere else in the same way. There's not that traditional rivalry between schools here, MK is a much more even playing field and there's a much more community feel between schools.

For you, what does Milton Keynes offer teachers that make it a great place to work?

A positive working environment. And the transport connections are key. We have staff who live in MK, as well as surrounding areas like Northampton, Bedford and Aylesbury, all are within half an hour. Rail connections are very good. Lots of staff who live here talk about the high quality of life in Milton Keynes, the greenery, the work of The Parks Trust, access to the city centre, the fact you can nip up to the shops after work and get what you need quickly. Those are all really attractive things.

What would you say to anyone considering teaching in Milton Keynes?

I think it would be a very clever decision for their career long term, there is so much expansion of schools underway. The opportunities here are way beyond what you would get in other urban areas so they should think about how MK can help them progress. The schools here are very forward looking; they're proactive and innovative in terms of how they work.

Sometimes not having that history works in our favour; we're able to operate without saying 'well this is what we did 20 years ago'. I think on the whole staff here are quite young, which reflects the city itself, and there's a very good social network so people can meet with others who live locally. Facilities for families are fantastic, train links for people to do things in the evenings and weekends are great. Again, the shopping and theatre are excellent. I think it's also that you can get from one side of the city in less than 10 minutes.

Best thing about Milton Keynes?

The opportunity to create something different to operate in a unique environment. It's an exciting place to live and work, which I don't think you get in many places in the UK. The way in which you can develop your career quickly, with the right support, is absolutely fantastic, and quite rare. I know my career and others I know locally wouldn't have progressed at the rate they have if they weren't in MK. It's a very fortunate position to be in.

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