

Anne McErlane's Town Visit

Anne McErlane, a Primary school teacher from Mount St Michaels Primary School in Randalstown went out for a day around the local town to find out about work within different employment sectors. Anne visited a garden centre, newspaper office, tourist information centre, car dealership, post office, estate agents and the civic centre.

During her visits Anne wanted to find out:

- How learning opportunities for children in the classroom could be connected with the real world
- About the different work roles within the various establishments
- How various organisations are interdependent with others both locally and globally for goods and services
- How environmentally responsible organisations are

From a teaching perspective the main learning/insights gained:

When asking people if they had as pupils, ever considered their career today the majority said 'No'. One comment was,

'I probably would have told you I wouldn't be able to do it.'

Most people seem to have based their choices on what they 'could *not* do' rather than what they 'could do'. Most people had said that when they were in school they had not known that the jobs they ended up doing existed. This stresses the importance that young people do not need to know what they want to be but stresses the importance that they do need to know what is out there.

People were *living* the skills and capabilities in their job that is one way I can let children see how relevant the skills and capabilities are to their life now in school and later when they enter the world of work. This demonstrated for me also the importance of fostering a 'can do' attitude from the outset.

A lot of the people I spoke to said that when they were at school there was an assumption that those who went to the grammar school would get the jobs of the doctor, lawyer, accountant etc. One man I spoke to told me how he did not have the 11+ and so it was assumed that he would automatically work on a building site. He described to me how he had tried so many things that he did not like and

that it was by chance that he took on a role working with young adults who displayed special educational needs. He went on to explain how he has learned so much in this role, how he enjoys his job and has found his 'niche'. He told me that 'in hindsight I could have progressed further in this field but I'm too old now'. My experience made me realise how I have never really opened up the possibilities of what we can do in the classroom related to the workplace in a meaningful context.

I have taken children on many visits but they don't really know about some of the experiences that they could be exposed to, I've realised that there are so many lost opportunities. Everyone that I visited without exception was welcoming and helpful. I wouldn't normally think of asking these people to engage in the education of the local primary school children but I am confident that I will be able to now.