

TESTIMONIES

Oakham School, England

Extract of report from Clémence J. written end October 2009

Being an assistant at Oakham School is an amazing experience. Not only are the pupils very keen to learn and improve, but the whole school system is impressive and the atmosphere very welcoming. As a member of staff you can enjoy and take part in any activities you are interested in (arts, sports, academic) and even have the opportunity to accompany a trip, as I did to the Parliament in London last month. If you want to discuss school matters, you can easily get in touch with all staff members who also always make sure you are enjoying your time in England.

I teach 15 periods per week so I have enough time to prepare lessons and also travel around Great Britain. Concerning lessons, the French department gives me free hand for A-level and IB pupils who have conversation lessons in groups of maximum four. As far as GCSE pupils are concerned, I support teachers' classes and therefore, I have to stick to the syllabus.

You can save money while you are in Oakham for the school provides the accomodation, internet access, delicious food three times a day and the foreign language assistants, who live altogether in a two-storey building (with living-room, kitchen and laundry-room), are lucky enough to have a cleaning-lady everyday.

As you might have guessed, I really love working at Oakham.

Extract of report from Claire B., 2006-2007

As an answer to your mail, here are a few impressions about my year in Oakham. I very much appreciate my time here, and I do not regret my choice at all. I will try to make a few paragraphs about everything.

First the school itself: very impressive, with all the new technology you can think of (interactive boards and very elaborate intranet system). The buildings themselves are rather new but not most of them are quite nice. The school is very well organised and relies very much on this intranet system for everything. Everyone is very kind and eager to help the newcomers, for whom the impressive organisation of the school can at first be a little bit frightening. The language department is the youngest and of course there are plenty of nationalities: this year Spanish, French, Swiss, Austrian, Bolivian, etc... the atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly. The meals, which you can all take at school, are very good and diverse. Half of the pupils are boarders. The organisation of the school is very identical to Harry Potter and is very impressive and different from France

My work in the french department consists in twelve hours, in fact about 18 periods of 40 minutes. With the premieres and terminales (called "upper school") I am alone with a group of two to four pupils and do what I want with them (articles, games, films). In these 18 periods

there are also about 5 periods with the “troisiemes” and “quatriemes” (called middle school”) this time with a teacher whom you help with a whole class. You make your own timetable according to the free periods of the pupils. Sometimes, but it is quite rare, a teacher asks you to help outside your work time, to survey a class or to help with the supported studies. But it is not very often and you can refuse of course. The pupils are of very different levels, but all in all all are quite eager to progress and there are no problems of discipline, because they all come from a very privileged background (understandable when you see the impressive fee they have to pay a year!). There are a lot of pupils from all over the world and it is all the more interesting.

Preparing the lessons really does not take a lot of time and you thus have plenty of free time. The school has many activities to propose for free, a fitness centre and a swimming pool, and a very big library. For example me I have done computer lessons (with a diploma at the end), mosaic and kick boxing. You can do as much as you want, and there is nearly everything you can think about. You share a house in the town, with all the equipment, with two other assistants (in my case Spanish and Austrian) and you can do what you want in it (parties, invite family or friends). All is paid by the school, lodging, bills, food are provided by the school for free. Your salary (1013 euros a month for me) is thus all for you. You have eleven weeks of paid holidays in your nine month of work, which is a lot 9one month for Christmas). You thus ahve a lot of time and monnety to travel (I have already been to London, Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham, Peterborough, Leichester...)

To speak fair, the only problem to me is the town. Although it is a council town, it is very very small . Half of the town is occupied by the school and there is no cinema, no disco, no shopping centre... You thus have to take the train to have access to that. Another drawback is that as nearly all the inhabitants are either teachers or pupils, you never have the impression to “leave” work. But apart from that, it is a very pretty time with thatched cottages and a little castle and a beautiful lake nearby to go cycling. Either the Town or the countryside is very very English. Cambridge is at 40 minutes by train, London at 2h, Birmingham at 1h30. There is a direct line from Stansted Airport to Oakham.

Thus, for someone not bothered by the lack of facilities in the town, I would very very much advice to apply for Oakham school, it is a very original occasion to experiment something you will never see in an other country, to work in a very privileged environment, and to meet nice people from all over the world, and of course to improve your English!

Marlène B., octobre 2009

Oakham School is a private school with pupils from 11 to 18 years old (from first form to seventh form). The job of the French assistants mostly consists in conversations lessons with small groups. But the French assistants also work with the teachers in their classes, most of the time working with several small groups during the lessons. The aim of the conversation lessons is to help the pupils to improve their oral level in French.

For the first term, the French assistants can choose the topics of their lessons. Then they have to talk more specifically about themes that can help the pupils for their exams. If the assistants have any problem they can ask the teachers of Oakham School as they are very supportive and help the assistants whenever they can. Working at Oakham School is a very good experience for those who want to become teachers.

The school is a great one and the students are very nice and with a very good level most of the time. One of the many good sides of this job is that you can keep studying at the university Blaise Pascal thanks to the CEAD. I passed my 1st year of Master last year and I had time to study since you only have 10 hours of lessons per week! And they let me stay in France about a month in December and January for the exams! You just have to register at the UBP and the CEAD before leaving to England.

The town of Oakham is small but welcoming, and it is a good place to discover the English way of life as it is a very typical British town.

To sum up, it is an incredible experience and the conditions are wonderful! I really recommend the job and the school. The only real commitment is to be serious and involved in your job (which is the case for most of the jobs I think!)

Clémence J., octobre 2009

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Report sent by Béatrice T. January 2008

Let's talk about Oakham...

Oakham is a quiet town situated in the Rutland. Oakham school is composed of several buildings located in different parts of the town, therefore you can say that the school is everywhere. Generally, the assistants' houses are near the languages department, which is very good thing. The languages department is composed of different departments such as the French, the Spanish, the German and the Italian one (the french one is the most important). People who work there are very nice and this is what you can hear when you arrive at the

school. Everybody talks on a positive way about the school. And they are right! Concerning the job of assistant, it can be divided into two parts. I have classes on my own with students, they are between 16 and 18 and the biggest group is composed of four people; and I have classes with teachers, their pupils are between 14 and 16. I work 12 hours a week and I earn £685 (National insurance has to be deduced, about £30). One of the main advantages in Oakham is that you have free accommodation and free food. You share a house with somebody from another foreign country. For my part, I live with a Colombian girl, therefore I try to improve my Spanish... To be an assistant is not only a professional experience but a human experience too. Together we share our impressions about our job, our fears... As an assistant I have to prepare the conversation lessons by myself (the one we had at university can be ideas). If you want to earn more money you can give private lessons which are very well paid! At Oakham school classes do not last one hour but 40 minutes. It is nice of course, but sometimes a little bit short to do some activities. In general, pupils are very kind and polite. Since I work 12 hours a week, I have lots of free time. Fortunately, the school offers many activities, related to sport, art... (the main sport being rugby) I do aerobics and dance and I like going to the fitness center and the swimming pool. For the two last ones, there are staff time and student time. If you like reading, Oakham school library is huge. During the week ends, sometimes I go to Leicester and Peterborough which are interesting for shopping. They are not very far, half an hour by train.

It is such a pleasure to work there that I do not have the impression to work! And another advantage is that holidays are longer than in France: 2 weeks in October, 3 and a half in December, 1 in February, 3 in March and 1 in May. It is very pleasant if you are a little homesick.

Oakham school is a lovely place where it is a pleasure to work, the only reason of my departure is that I can not live without people that I love.