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I am currently completing my final year of a Business and Management degree at Edge Hill University. I completed the Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management (CSBM) as part of a sandwich placement as Business Manager Intern at Keswick School, Cumbria, in my third year of my degree (2014-2015).

After leaving school in 2012 I started a Business and Management degree at Edge Hill University. Having completed both a BTEC and A Level in business at school, I was excited to build on the knowledge I had gained and create a higher understanding of the organisational practices that take place within businesses. As part of my degree there was an option to undertake a sandwich placement, in my third year. This is something that I was extremely interested in as I knew it would allow me to use the knowledge that I had gained at university and apply it to a work environment. Having done some occasional administration work within Keswick School I was delighted when they offered me the opportunity of spending a year with them as a Business Manager Intern. As an outstanding school I knew that the experience that I would gain from the staff, that would be mentoring me, would be second to none. To add to the excitement of gaining a sandwich placement Keswick School's Business Director said that she would like me to complete a Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management (CSBM). I knew this would be a fantastic opportunity which would not only allow me to gain an understanding of how schools work as a business, but also gain a qualification that would enhance my CV and hopefully allow me to gain a job within a school in the future.

Soon after starting my sandwich placement I received information regarding the Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management and discovered the units that I would be completing. The units ranged from Risk to HR and also included two development units. I was extremely excited about starting the course, however I was slightly concerned that my lack of school related business knowledge would hold me back. The first part of the course consisted of an online web chat with the course tutor and all of the course applicants within my region. Being used to sitting in a lecture hall and taking notes this was a completely different experience. But once I got started and the tutor, Doug, explained the course in more detail I started to look forward to going to the face to face tutorial in Darlington.

On the morning of the first face to face meeting I was excited but nervous, still having some concerns about my lack of knowledge regarding how business in schools worked. When I arrived at the course I was pleased to be sitting with ladies who all seemed to feel the same as me; excited but nervous. The day included a range of tasks and I was pleased to discover that some of the business practices Doug spoke about I was aware of from university. This increased my confidence and made me think that I might actually be able to complete this course. At the end of day all of us realised that we had a huge amount of work to do and many of us wanted to get started as soon as possible. Many of the people on the course were concerned about how they would be able to write an essay, never mind referencing in an essay, after many years of not doing so. Conversely this was the easier part for me having completed many assignments in my first and second year at university, but, I knew the pressure was on as I needed to settle into my sandwich placement and also ensure that I passed the diploma.

I have to say I enjoyed all of the units that I completed as part of the course. Having undertaken finance and HR modules at university these were the areas of the course that I thought would interest me the most. However, to my surprise I particularly enjoyed the facilities unit which allowed me to gain an understanding of an area of school business management that I had not previously experienced. In line with completing this unit I spent time with the Premises Manager at Keswick School, he explained his role and the tasks he completes in great detail which gave me a wide range of understanding about how facilities are managed within schools. Additional to this, the facilities unit included a section regarding catering in schools. Having completed a catering GCSE and having a general interest in

catering and healthy living this section was of particular interest. Overall, this unit gave me a huge amount of understanding about the varied role of a School Business Manager that I have not previously been aware of.

The final development unit part of the Level 4 Diploma meant I was tasked with identifying, planning and managing a project. Being known by my friends as "chief organiser" I knew straight away this I would enjoy this unit. By the time I started this final section I had been at Keswick School for around six months and was really enjoying the range of tasks I was being asked to complete. When I mentioned to the school's Development Manager that I needed to organise and manage a project I was delighted when she told me that I could organise the school's performing arts festival; iPerform. The event was a weeklong festival which included drama and music workshops for both pupils from Keswick School and the local feeder schools, along with showcasing evening events including a choir night, comedy night and band night. The finale of the festival saw the whole school, including both pupils and staff, taking part in a lip-dub, a song which was written by pupils and Keswick School's music department.

Having never organised an event of this scale I was slightly daunted at first about completing the organisation for this event but being extremely motivated, willing learn and supported by colleagues, I was able to ensure that the event was a success. At the end of a long planning process and following a lot of hard work, I was astounded at the number of people who attended the events during iPerform. It was a fantastic feeling that the project I led was having such a positive effect on the pupils at Keswick School.

The final submission date for the Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management was in October 2015, meaning I was back at university. Consequently, I needed to juggle my final units with university assignments and my dissertation. So I was over the moon when I found out in November that I had successfully passed the diploma.

Both completing a Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management and undertaking a sandwich placement at Keswick School has been invaluable experience for me. It has not only enhanced my knowledge, but it has allowed me to apply both my dissertation and my final year modules to a school setting. Keswick School have supported me more than I could ever have imagined throughout, and I have gained a huge amount of practical knowledge about school business management.

I am now looking forward to completing my degree in Business and Management and I hope that completion of the Level 4 Diploma in School Business Management and the experience I have gained at Keswick School will allow me to have a successful career within a school setting.