

A Brew with



Lee Wilson, Deputy CEO

Welcome to our new feature - A Brew with...! Each month, we'll catch up with an Outwood Family colleague to find out more about them and their career. To kick things off, we took a coffee break with Lee Wilson, Deputy CEO.

First up, what are you drinking?

Coffee - double scoop to start the day!

When did you first join the Outwood Family?

I started in September 2013 - so this year is my 10th anniversary! I started on the same day that we opened Outwood Primary Academy Lofthouse Gate.

"We are all working together to one goal supporting each other along the way"

Happy anniversary! What were your initial thoughts when you began working at Outwood?

I quickly noticed that the word family was a genuine lived experience in this Trust. Family is really important to me. I have two boys of my own and I know there are times that each of them needs different things whether that be support, challenge or praise - what I love about Outwood is that you see this in abundance; we are all working together to one goal supporting each other along the way.

What do you love most about your job?

It has to be the difference that we can make. I always say that every single one of us does a job in an industry that is the most important sector in the country. Anyone who thinks differently probably needs to remember that they went through and needed an education establishment otherwise they wouldn't be in the job that they see as important today.

What is your favourite memory working at Outwood so far?

The journey of Kirkhamgate from so many perspectives. I vividly remember the magical moment of being able to share with a group of staff that the school had been rated 'Outstanding'

when largely the same group of staff, four terms earlier, had gone through an inspection that resulted in the school going into special measures. Beyond that, when we built the new school building, we gave children the very best physical conditions for their education. The building itself is a symbol of what a family of schools can do together when we put all of our children first and prioritise where the greatest need is, regardless of where we may be positioned ourselves.

Is there a particular colleague who you enjoy working with who you'd like to give a shout-out to?

Shirley Horsfall - Cleaner at Newstead Green. She is the hardest-working person I know! I won't share her age, but she is in her fifth decade of cleaning and still comes to work every day with a smile on her face, a commitment to excellence, and takes pride in her work. She is a true role model for everyone.

"When I started, there were only three primary schools"

What do you think has been the biggest change since you began working at Outwood?

The growth of the primary sector to a point where we are now recognised nationally as a cross-phase family of schools. When I started, there were only three primary schools and I was the sole member of the school improvement team. I am incredibly proud of all that the primary team have achieved and the track record for excellence that they now have. I am looking forward to working closely with secondary and ensuring that all phases work in greater alignment, sharing expertise and having a seamless 3-18 offer within the heart of every community.

When you're not at work, how do you like to spend your time?

I don't stay still! I like to see new places and experience new things. I enjoy travelling whenever I can, either in the UK or further afield. This summer I went jungle trekking in Sumatra. It was an amazing experience to see orangutans and elephants in their natural habitat.

Which three people, dead or alive, would you want to have a brew with?

Walt Disney - I admire his creativity and imagination and how that legacy has stood the test of time whilst allowing others to innovate within the initial principles of the company.

Steve Irwin - I am obsessed with crocodiles and alligators and find them such interesting creatures, so to sit and have a brew with him would allow me to have an insight into someone who has been more up close and personal than I would ever get.

Beverley Knight - Performing Arts is really important and was a central part of my secondary and post-16 education. I find her an amazing performer, with a career spanning a number of decades, both on stage as well as a recording artist. She plays a key role in nurturing new talent, which is what we do in this organisation. I believe that every child and every member of this organisation has a talent and it is our job to discover it, nurture it and provide the opportunity to use it for the benefit of all.

