

A Brew with



Melissa Brant-Smith, Principal

Welcome to A Brew with...! Each month, we catch up with an Outwood Family colleague to learn more about them and their career. This month, we caught up with Melissa Brant-Smith, Principal at Outwood Academy Riverside.

First up, what are you drinking?

Coffee! I love it best when it's fresh, strong and with a dash of frothy milk.

When did you first join the Outwood Family?

I joined in April 2014 as an Assistant Principal at Outwood Academy Acklam. I've been really fortunate to have worked in a number of academies over the last ten years - Bishopsgarth, Ripon, Easingwold, Redcar and a term at Ormesby. During that time I've been an Associate Principal, Vice Principal and now a Principal.

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

I thought - "Wow! This makes sense." It was very different to working in stand alone schools and even though there were only eight secondary academies at the time, it felt really big. Learning about the 80/20 was really exciting because it meant there was a chance to add something new that would affect schools across the North. This was very new and I had never considered how powerful a MAT could be before that point.

"I know they feel safe and cared for here, whilst we're doing our best to give them better life chances."

What do you love most about your job?

I love how different every day is, how funny children can be when they are just going about their daily activities and most of all, how much we mean to them. I know they feel safe and cared for here, whilst we're doing our best to give them better life chances.

What is your favourite memory working at Outwood so far?

Coming out of Covid in 2021 and moving into our newly refurbished temporary building. There was real amazement and excitement on the children's

faces when they suddenly had something near to a real secondary school for the first time.

It was March 2021 and they were able to use a bunsen burner for the first time, cook a meal in a food tech room, dance on a sprung floor and space to move around that wasn't shared with the general public.

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

This is really tricky as my Riverside work family are brilliant! I will mention Rebecca Warren though - she is our discovery manager and is one of the most positive people you'll meet. She is genuinely committed to helping our EAL students settle into school and provides them with a safe space to go to at any time whilst teaching them the curriculum. Her enthusiasm for the job is excellent and she never seems phased by any challenge thrown her way! One year she was on a residential trip on Holy Island with Year 8, even though it was her birthday! True dedication.

"It is amazing to think about how many Outwood pupils now exist across the country."

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

Growth. When I started we had less than ten schools but this has grown to 42 now including Primaries. It is amazing to think about how many Outwood pupils now exist across the country.

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

I like a cold, hazy pale ale and to play music with friends... However this is not always possible with three children, so to compensate, my five and two year old shout at Alexa to play random songs and we generally just dance around. I also love the beach and searching for fossils and geodes.



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

My Grand-Père Gabriel Larose - I would like to know more about our family history in Mauritius and his Dutch heritage. I'd ask him to play the accordion for me and tell me stories about when he worked on cargo ships as an engineer in the 1950s.

Thom Yorke - I still love Radiohead after all these years. I'd want to sing with him too.

Albert Einstein - I'd love to know what he thought about the world today and what his theories would be about the many possibilities out there, 69 years after his death.

