



VIC GODDARD

IT MUST BE LOVE

VIC GODDARD EXPLAINS WHY, AS FAR AS HE'S CONCERNED, HE STILL HAS THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD...

It must be extremely challenging as a head to lead such a huge number of children. Individual contact with children must be near-impossible and the role must be increasingly about managing (children, parents, teachers, Ofsted etc) rather than teaching."

This was comment that was brought to my attention from an internet forum recently. It made me consider, why did I become a teacher in the first place... and have I actually lost sight of this? Well, apart from the obvious things – being inspired by my own great teachers and the importance of education that was instilled by my parents – I chose to do the job I do because I love it. Ever since I began doing little bits of coaching when at school, right through to today; I still love teaching. And I'm still a teacher.

However, when I was doing research for my book (very unsubtle plug there), I asked people on Twitter who were teachers but didn't aspire to being *head* teachers, to tell me why not – and they certainly did. The overarching theme was that they wanted to continue to 'make a difference' and that the best way to do this is in the classroom. I wasn't surprised that was the feedback, but I was a bit taken aback by how forcefully it was said in some cases! 'Maybe they have a point', I thought to myself. Not for long though...

I won't deny that when I moved over to the 'dark side' of SLT I got a fair bit of stick from my teacher mates (mainly PE, so I suppose it comes with the territory) for 'selling out' and 'leaving the classroom', and I definitely found some bits of the transition really difficult. I still miss being a form tutor massively; I loved being the person who was an advocate for my tutees, the one they would go to in both good and bad circumstances. I guess I have just tried to replicate that feeling, but on a whole school scale. It isn't quite the same, though, because as accessible as I make myself, as open and welcoming as I am, I am still 'the head teacher'.

The challenge of moving out of the classroom is about a shifting mind set. I have never considered that I am doing less of the job I love; in fact I think I do more 'teaching' now than I have ever done. I have a very simple image in my mind regarding this, of a pebble being dropped into a still pond. The difference now is just the size of my pond. If I get things wrong, which probably happens far too regularly, the impact it has across my school is massive. I always feel that it is a privilege when parents choose to trust us with their children (although we have to be realistic and accept that sometimes parents actually have little choice). However, when I became a head teacher I soon realised that an almost bigger compliment is when an adult chooses to forge his or her



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career under my leadership. My role to support and challenge staff – and often, just leave them alone to get on with it – at Passmores means I have to often be all things to all people and that can be tough, of course.

So I go back to my original thought, about whether or not I have lost focus on why I came into the profession in the first place. And the conclusion I have come to is a clear, 'no'. Today I had a walk around lessons for an hour and loved the chance to see what brilliance is being produced by our young people because of the great teaching that was going on; I got as much pleasure and feeling of accomplishment from that as I did from the first time I taught 'surds' to a year 11 maths class and they got it. It was a different type of joy, but one that I felt I had a right to have, due to my input into making it happen; vicarious as that input is. I then did my usual farewell to students at the end of the day, standing outside the school. I had literally dozens of conversations with various young people about the highs and lows of their day and genuinely had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

So thank you, whoever the kind person was who wrote those concerns on the forum – but there is really no need to feel that way. I know there are times when headteachers are seen wringing their hands and looking like they are carrying the weight of the world, but let's be honest – we are not. Our job is a privilege. A privilege that at times is made much challenging by the people above us who are supposed to be helping... but a privilege nevertheless.

