

An Interview with...

Mr Levi Trent – Drama Teacher and Master of the First Floor

Hi Mr Trent. You've just finished your first year at school. How have you found it?

It has certainly been a memorable experience. To say the job keeps me on my toes would be somewhat of an understatement, but I've loved almost every single moment of it.

What made you want to become a teacher?

I actually attended a boarding school myself and it was not the most enjoyable experience. In fact, it was some of the worst years of my life and I couldn't wait to get out. I only survived thanks to the support and encouragement of one particular teacher who supported and inspired me. I may not remember every word he ever said to me, but I can never forget the way he made me feel when he was around. I went into teaching to be like him and to hopefully be that beacon of hope for other students the way he was for me.

That's pretty awesome. So you're the drama teacher AND Master of the First Floor (MotFF). Be honest, which part do you enjoy more?

Well let me start by saying I'm campaigning for a title change, because I've always thought that 'Master of the First Floor' just makes me sound like some kind of terrible supervillain!

If you'd asked me before I started which I was looking forward to the most, I would have definitely said being the drama teacher, but that has not turned out to be the case. Being MotFF has been an inordinately rewarding experience. Don't get me wrong, being responsible for nearly a hundred of you on a day-to-day basis is exhausting and frustrating and but it is also fun, interesting and truly, truly enjoyable.

As an obvious fan of drama, how have you enjoyed being responsible for... one particular dorm. I don't think I need to name it!

I can't possibly imagine which one you mean (lol), but yes, there has certainly been plenty of drama on the first floor this year. Joking aside, and keeping in mind every dorm has had its own issues, the resilience of you students impresses me more with every day I spend at Kingswood. So too does your sense of community and brotherhood. The challenges you have all endured, survived and risen above is nothing short of inspirational for me.

Thanks. We think we're pretty awesome too! So what would you say has been the most difficult part to adapt to working here at Kingswood?

Punishments! I doubt that's a surprise to anyone. It's certainly one of the more bizarre and unexpected characteristics of the school and certainly took some getting used to. No teacher sets out hoping to punish students, at least no good teacher, but sometimes they prove necessary. They definitely make for some interesting experiences.

I was hoping you'd say that. What do you say to those who question Kingswood's choice of disciplinary options?

This is another one of those things where my answer now is very different to the one I would have given before I started, but having spent a year witnessing the process, I am very much a convert. While it may appear as something quite unusual, possibly even cruel, there are genuine reasons behind the enforced nudity, reasons that only work at a place like Kingswood.

Punishments here are, as they should be, a deterrent against misbehaviour. Enforced nudity serves the purpose of acting as a constant reminder of a student's misbehaviour, as well as identifying them to their peers as having done something 'wrong'. Being such an unpleasant experience also makes most students keen to avoid it at all, and those who experience are most certainly keen to avoid a repeat occurrence.

However, the punishment also has other very positive aspects to it. In a way, enduring a naked punishment is a bonding experience for you boys, a sort of 'rite of passage'. There are very few who make it to the end of Year 13 without experiencing it at least once. The true spirit of Kingswood comes into play with it too, as you boys will be merciless in your teasing of anyone enduring a punishment... but only until it concludes. After that, there is little to no teasing at all. Your sentence is complete, you've paid the price for your misdeeds and you move on.

Finally, another amazing part of the Kingswood culture is the extreme sense of body positivity. Even at the height of teasing, nobody ever picks on appearance. For boys to be able walk around nude and not have to worry about being picked on for a pudgy belly or the size of their penis or anything of that nature, that really speaks highly of the bond and respect you all share. It's truly a touching sentiment.

And what do you say to those who say teachers should not be exempt from the Kingswood discipline?

Interesting. I've always been of the opinion that one should lead by example. But to that end, I would obviously never do anything to warrant any kind of punishment, so I guess I don't need to worry about it, do !!

Sneaky answer! We're almost out of time, so final question. As you move into your second year, what's next?

You may be glad (or disappointed?!) to hear there are no plans for any movement at this time. I'll be back at the end of August ready to welcome in a new batch of Year 7s and welcome back the returning boys moving into Years 8 and 9. I've got at least one more year as MotFF, probably more, but let's see what challenges next year can throw my way to change that! Hopefully with Covid finally under control we can return to a few of our more fun activities and make next year even better!

Thank you for your time, Mr Trent, and thank you from all the boys of the First Floor. It's been a pleasure.