



**NIONE MEAKIN** describes how Lynda Cranston (above) has now qualified and is enjoying teaching in a primary school



## Qualified and contented

**W**hen as a child she used to make and mark maths books for her brother, it seemed fairly obvious where Lynda Cranston's future career lay. Now in her first primary school teaching post, she is experiencing the reality of her childhood vocation.

Lynda, 23, always wanted to be a teacher. After finishing her A levels, she enrolled on a four-year BEd teaching degree at the University of Plymouth, in Devon, based at its Exmouth campus. She explains her choice of degree: "Some people do a three-year degree followed by a Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), but I decided to do the four-year teaching course as I thought I'd get a more rounded perspective. I also thought I'd be more prepared. I'd never have been ready to teach in just a year."

### Shorter modules

Over the duration of the course, she was taught how to teach the foundation subjects of maths, English and science to primary school level, as well as PE, her chosen specialism. Shorter modules in teaching subjects

such as history, geography, music and art were also included. The students were examined regularly.

"They make sure you've got a good enough subject knowledge and then they teach you how to teach it," she said, "In most of the subjects, you are expected to be up to GCSE standard, but in your specialism, you have to be up to degree level."

A major part of the degree – and one Lynda considers essential – was yearly teaching practice, in which students are required to complete unpaid, assessed placements at a school. The duration of these built up each year, until in the fourth year Lynda did a placement for ten weeks.

She said: "Teaching practice was really useful as it gives you a flavour of what it is like to be a teacher. You've got the knowledge you need to teach and then they give you the teaching practice to try it out. A lot of the learning gets done there – you can't teach behaviour management in a classroom. You have to find out what works and what doesn't."

### Teaching post

There are no final exams, as the degree is marked on modules and

Lynda graduated last summer. She was then lucky enough to hear of a short-term teaching post at a Gloucestershire primary school.

Short-term vacancies are rarely advertised – Lynda heard of hers through a friend and was invited for interview. She said: "I was taken for a tour round the school, asked if I had any experience teaching mixed age classes and asked if I was used to working in a topic-based way, ie if you are teaching Ancient Greece, you could link in appropriate exercises in maths, geography and history. I must have said some good things, as I was offered the job."

Lynda has now begun her Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) Year – a period of full-time teaching with the support of a mentor, usually a more senior member of staff. She has learned that good control techniques are key.

Lynda is hopeful she will pass her NQT year, in preparation for a long career in teaching. She eventually aims to become a head of department and has no doubt she chose the right career: "Even though it's long hours and I have no social life, it's very rewarding and pretty much how I always hoped it would be."