

SNA Alumni

Robert – 2019 Leaver

Robert, 20 years old. Studied at SNA for both my GCSE's and A levels. I have dyslexia and dyspraxia (my hand/eye co-ordination is not very good & it makes writing really difficult) so studying wasn't easy and it still isn't! I never thought someone like me would ever end up staying on in education after my GCSE's, due to how hard I found things, but I had a lot of support from my teachers & parents and I managed to come out with some good results which, to be honest, I'm still surprised at!

My Year 10 work experience, arranged by Mrs Caunt, sparked my career aspirations! She listened to my ideas and passions and secured me a placement with British Geological Survey in Keyworth, and it was whilst working there, that I knew I'd love a career in geology/environmental. BGS gather data from all around the world & help understand how the Earth & its environment is changing.

Staying on for A Levels was a good option and allowed me to gain higher qualifications that employers look for. I studied Geography, History & ICT. Because of the struggles I had, I found the teachers were just the best at offering additional support and advice and the wider experiences were really great. I would say the first year was the hardest and I was so proud to stick with it and finish the course.

University wasn't for me, so I talked to Mrs Caunt about apprenticeships, as I knew that if I wanted to get into environmental studies, I would have to continue in education and training somehow. We had a careers meeting and she kept me up to date with apprenticeships that came up and as luck would have it! BGS were recruiting that summer! We discussed the opportunity and I was grateful for the support with the application process. I had kept in touch with BGS and assisted with some voluntary work over the summer after my GCSE's and this really helped me to demonstrate how passionate I was about the organisation and their early careers.

I attended the interview and although I didn't get the job I applied for, they saw potential in me and offered me another opportunity as an apprentice Lab Technician. I started in September 2019 and work 4 days a week in the business with 1 day at college. I prepare soil samples and rocks from all over the world, getting them ready for analysis. The data gathered from the samples helps companies and governments understand pollution, erosion and if the soil/rocks are stable for development or mining. I've also explored nuclear waste samples from Chernobyl to see just how radioactive they still are!

I hope to continue in this line of work once my apprenticeship completes, and the business have said they will do everything they can to take me on as a permanent member of staff. Importantly, I am enjoying being in the world of work, being hands on and learning from a wide range of industry professionals.

My advice to others – work hard, aim high and reach out for extra support if you need it. Try as many experiences as you can, as this can develop your skills and help you to explore your career ideas.