Sam Campeau

Sam is a Year 5 teacher who joined TBS in August 2015

My day starts in the dark. Five o’clock is the best time to walk my dog; the Nepali streets are empty, save for the occasional jogger. It took time for my best friend to get used to the feral dogs that roam the neighborhood, but they’re all buddies now.

The morning is quiet but soon will give way to the din of motorbikes, roar of diesel lorries, and the always-beeping horns. Horns have a different meaning in Kathmandu than my home country. Here, horns are a way of saying “I’m here! I’m here!” instead of “Hey you! Get out of my way!”

I return home, do a bit of yoga, and start the coffee. It’s springtime, so I get solar-heated water with my morning shower; winter, I’m not always so lucky.

Eggs here are the best. My breakfast standard is eggs over easy atop fresh bread from the local bakery. Perfectly orange yolks break across the plate — a great start to my day. I work a bit on the manuscript I’ve been toying with the last year or so. At 7:30 I’m out the door.

Arrive at The British School with time to review my plans, make final edits to Google Slides, and greet children and parents as they walk through the gate. My Year 5 students line up at the bell, already eagerly asking questions about what we’re doing that day, or reminiscing about the weekend.

The first block is Guided Reading groups, followed by Maths. We use a program called Maths No Problem, based on Singapore’s framework. TBS adopted it last year. Any new framework comes with its growing pains, but the teachers in Primary are really picking up and running with it. The children get excited when we break out the manipulatives to learn about fractions, decimals and operations. They’ve come a long way in their communication and cooperation skills.

A quick break with colleagues on the rooftop terrace. We chat, share snacks, drink tea (this is after all a British school), and have some laughs about what’s trending on social media. I might work with my Year 5 partner on last-minute changes to the upcoming lessons, or discuss how we can best use our learning assistants to help struggling students that afternoon.

Most days, English is next. A quick skills-based starter activity, usually followed by time for students to work through the process of planning, drafting or publishing. Much of our writing projects happen on Google Docs, so I can feedback to students’ writing from my laptop in real time. It’s impressive, the many innovative ways cloud technology is used across our school.

Some planning time follows as the students go to one of their specialist classes. Year group teachers collaborate with our specialist teachers so all lessons connect to the thematic topics we cover throughout the year. I like to know that what we do in my classroom will be reinforced in other classrooms.

Lunch! Back on the rooftop terrace, everyone’s in good spirits. More tea. If the smog is down, we can see the snowcapped Himalayas. It’s a nice reminder, one of the things that brought us all to Kathmandu.

Some of the teachers opt for the lunch provided by a local catering company. It’s a nice bite, expertly prepared with fresh ingredients. Most days though, I prefer to bring my own lunch. See, in my “past life” before teaching, I spent about ten years in the foodservice industry. I take cooking very seriously. My reheated leftovers are no joke. They always draw a bit of attention from my colleagues.

Last couple blocks of the day. One might be a second planning period. I like having dedicated time each day to plan in tandem with the other Year 5 teacher. We see eye-to-eye on how to approach the learning
objectives and carry out instruction. We’re both creative, and given that we both have ten-plus years experience in education, we each bring a substantial “bag of tricks” to the lessons.

The last part of the day also typically includes time for Topic learning. We use the International Primary Curriculum. I enjoy the project-based learning aspect of IPC, as do the children. It’s a great way to wrap up the day, with children up out of their seats, working towards meeting success criteria with their classmates.

I like to finish with a few minutes reading aloud from our Michael Morpurgo novel. Thinking aloud and discussing the text as we go along this week has helped students attain stronger understanding of shared themes in literature.

I shake students’ hands goodbye, wishing them a nice afternoon as they head to after-school clubs, or off to meet their parents. Another hour or so for me to mark work, develop the next week’s plans or prepare materials.

Kathmandu has few supermarkets but many small stalls. On my walk home, I stop at the dairy shop for locally-made yogurt, the greengrocer for fresh vegetables and the bakery for focaccia. I smile smugly, thinking of what I could prepare tonight that will draw the most chatter at lunch tomorrow. I get home and my dog has just finished her walk with the dog walker. She’s excited to see me, as always.

Kathmandu has its challenges, for sure. The local dogs can be noisy and mischievous. Some days, dust and smog are unbearable. Compared to other Asian capitals, I find it can be difficult to get hold of certain household items, or accomplish simple tasks like changing the rate plan on my mobile. Yet Kathmandu offers me simplicity and zen-like serenity that would be near impossible to find in the bustle of other, more metropolitan locales.

“It’s nice to be here,” I think, setting to work on dinner.

Emma Malla

Emma is a PE teacher who joined TBS in 2012

Namaste! People in Nepal spring into action during the daylight hours so not long after I awake every morning the sun dawns and the noises of daily Nepali life can be heard. For me it is the pressure cookers, dogs barking and bells from small temples nearby that I hear first thing and not long after that my two sons are awake and ensure it is a busy morning before I leave for school.

The British School of Kathmandu is located in a mostly residential suburb in the Lalitpur district about half an hour from the heart of the city of Kathmandu. The walk to school is busy with vegetable and fruit sellers, milk deliveries and on a lucky morning I will see the Zoo elephant out for a morning stroll. A big difference from rural Ireland where I grew up!

I have been teaching at The British School since 2012 and a day in the life of a TBS teacher is a different story every day. TBS is made up of students from all over the world, over 60 countries were represented at the most recent school international day and this school year we are celebrating 50 years in existence.

My day begins with my Year 10 mentor group and as I am a whole school PE teacher, the rest of my day is filled with classes ranging from Early Years all the way to KS4. I can be found anywhere on the school site during the day doing anything from throwing a shot putt, running around with hoola hoops, or jumping from a springboard. The students I meet throughout the course of the day are enthusiastic about PE and developing their love for and enjoyment of physical activities is high on my list of priorities.
After school I am usually on the Basketball court coaching or involved in some Community initiative. At TBS we have a huge community outreach programme and there are lots of opportunities for teachers to be involved in projects. Since the 2015 Earthquake in Nepal there is a greater sense of community awareness not just in our school but in Kathmandu.

My husband is Nepali and we live in a joint family which is typical in this part of the world. My evenings are filled with Lego, football and storytelling with my sons and occasional battles with toothbrushing and bedtime. Dahl baht tarkari (lentils, rice and vegetables) is my normal dinner and as early to bed as possible before another different day in Kathmandu dawns.