

Welcome to SecEd's NQT special edition. The next eight pages offer a range of advice for NQTs as they approach the end of their first term. To begin, **Chris Keates** looks at the entitlements and support that all NQTs should be receiving

**T**he end of the first term of the school year is rapidly approaching and with it the first key milestone of the induction year for NQTs.

It is to be hoped that new teachers will have experienced more highs than lows so far and will have gained the confidence and satisfaction that comes from seeing pupils learning and progressing as a result of their teaching.

The experience NQTs have in this first and crucial induction year is extremely important and it is for this reason that successive governments have recognised the need to put statutory provisions in place which are specifically designed to ensure that the induction year provides a structured and supported introduction into the profession. These provisions include:

- A reduction in timetabled teaching, in addition to the contractual entitlement of a minimum of 10 per cent guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.
- Teaching only the age range or subject for which they have been trained.
- An induction tutor or mentor.
- Not routinely to have to teach classes or children with especially challenging discipline problems.
- Teaching the same class(es) on a regular basis to establish a routine and a rapport with pupils.
- Receiving regular feedback and support on progress.
- The right to be given early warning of any perceived problems or difficulties with progress.
- Professional and timely communication about judgements on performance.

These induction entitlements are designed to continue the process of developing the skills and expertise needed to become a great teacher.

The experience in this first and important year should be one where good schools will harness, use effectively and celebrate the enthusiasm, energy, commitment, new ideas and talent that NQTs bring to the role.

The best schools recognise the importance of

# Your rights as an NQT

growing and supporting new teachers and, most importantly, recognise that they need support, encouragement and working conditions which enable them to gain appropriate experience in their first school placement.

Many NQTs are positive about the support they receive during their induction year, but unfortunately not all have good experiences.

Some schools fail to provide the statutory entitlements, with too many NQTs facing excessive classroom observation with no feedback or constructive comment. Others are allocated classes of pupils who are known to exhibit extremely challenging behaviour, even with the most experienced of teachers.

Unfortunately, the NASUWT has a wealth of experience in supporting NQTs in addressing all these issues of concern.

Too often NQTs can feel reluctant to ask for help or support for fear that they may be seen as not coping or not up to the job. However, it is important to remember that seeking advice, whether from colleagues, managers or from your union, is something that all teachers, no matter how experienced, will need to do at times. No-one begins teaching knowing all the answers and a good school will understand that it is part of their job to nurture you.

The induction year is arguably one of the most challenging phases of a teacher's career and it is easy to become overwhelmed with the demands of the job. It is vital that new teachers make time for themselves and set realistic boundaries and expectations about what is achievable in order to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

The NASUWT is campaigning to bring downward pressure on teacher workload in order to address the high burn-out rate among recently qualified teachers.

Through our detailed research on workload, combined with our action and lobbying, we have helped to secured guidance from Ofsted dispelling the myth peddled in too many schools that Ofsted requires a specific type of lesson planning and marking system.

The government has also recognised the problem of excessive workload by establishing working parties to look at lesson planning, marking and data collection. This has led to guidance stating that triple marking is not required and there is no evidence that it aids pupil progress or raises standards. Furthermore, there are no requirements for marking of a particular type or volume (*SecEd*, May 2017).

There is no need to plan within an inch of your life. It is planned lessons, not lesson plans, that are required. Weekly or daily plans should not be a routine expectation. Longer term planning should start from schemes of work provided by schools, not from blank sheets of paper.

Schools should not be imposing bureaucratic and



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wasteful tracking and record keeping requirements that distract teachers from concentrating on teaching. The recently published report of the Teacher Workload Review Group set out further important recommendations on the use of pupil data and drew attention to the inappropriate ways in which too many schools use this data to set performance management objectives for teachers (*Making Data Work*, November 2018).

Requirements to produce mountains of lesson plans, deep mark every piece of work, constantly collect, analyse and input data should be challenged and the NASUWT is ready to support teachers in doing so.

While it is understandably daunting for new teachers to stand up for their rights and challenge poor practices in schools, it should be remembered that without these rights and entitlements it is much more difficult for teachers to provide children and young people with their entitlement to the highest quality of education.

It is vital that we support NQTs and continue to campaign for them and all other teachers to be recognised and rewarded as the highly skilled professionals they are and for them to have working conditions which enable them to focus on teaching

and learning. Whether it is NQTs facing the abuse of temporary contracts, unacceptable barriers to meeting the requirements to complete induction, lack of access to training, expectations to teach outside specialisms or age ranges, pupil indiscipline or flouting of pay and conditions entitlements, the NASUWT is here.

Our advice and guidance for NQTs is complemented by a programme of free professional seminars throughout the induction year.

This year can be a steep learning curve and we must be committed to standing alongside NQTs to support them through whatever this year brings and into the future. The NASUWT recognises that NQTs are a precious resource and we must campaign for the professional conditions that will enable all new teachers to flourish and enjoy a long and rewarding career in teaching.

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• *Chris Keates is general secretary of the NASUWT.*

## Further information

- *A workload audit: Thirty key questions for your school*, SecEd, May 2017: <http://bit.ly/2AbRG7o>
- *Making Data Work*, Workload Advisory Group/ DfE, November 2018: <http://bit.ly/2QGbZCd>

Learning how to say 'no', set boundaries and look after yourself is crucial to surviving as a teacher, especially in your first years at the chalkface. **Julian Stanley** offers some advice

**C**ongratulations on getting through your first term as an NQT. However tough you have found things – and the first term is tough for everyone – it will never be as daunting again. You have cleared your first hurdle and are well on your way to becoming a fully qualified teacher. Well done on getting this far!

## A proper break

The Christmas holiday is coming up and I strongly urge you to make sure you have a proper break. You may see this time as a chance to catch up with work and perhaps put a plan in place for the next two terms.

However, the most important thing you can do for your career right now is to have some time off from it. So try to switch off completely for at least some of the holiday.

I also advise you to do something completely different rather than just flopping in front of all that Christmas television – as tempting as that can be. Teaching is all about helping others; now is the time

# Tips for surviving your NQT year

to help yourself and take care of your own wellbeing. Maybe among your new year's resolutions, if you make them, could be ways to ensure that you switch off from work every evening and every weekend?

One caller to our free 24-hour helpline said that his NQT year was tough because he found it impossible to turn off from teaching and it spilled over into all areas of his life. Together with one of our experienced counsellors he was able to formulate a plan to keep work and the rest of his life separate. This is crucial if you are to enjoy a long and fulfilling career in teaching.

## Setting boundaries

Following on from this, remember that a break isn't just for Christmas! Make sure you take regular breaks throughout your NQT year. Staying at school longer to mark papers or working through your lunch break is not the best way to manage a workload that, I know, can at times feel overwhelming.

One of the best ways to prevent burn-out is to set boundaries. Leave work on time. Don't allow work to "bleed" into every aspect of your life. Don't talk or worry about work all evening, every evening when you get home. Be disciplined and set a cut-off time. Actually saying something out loud can help, such as: "Right. I'm putting that up on the shelf for the rest of the evening. What's on telly?"

Sometimes the hardest thing of all is to accept that most "to-do" lists never get completely done.

## Don't be afraid to say no!

It is possible that your colleagues view you as a keen NQT and may be tempted to add to your workload: "Could you just do this please? Would you be able to help with that?" As a new teacher, chances are you will

want to please at this early stage in your career and it can be difficult to turn down requests of this nature, as you don't want to seem unwilling.

If you find it hard to say no to someone's face when asked, then say instead that you will check your calendar to see if you can find room and come back to them. You can always send an email or text later saying that you are very sorry but you don't have time to do this extra task justice. Make the point that you don't want to spread yourself too thinly.

Remember, it is not a sign of weakness to admit that what you are already doing is taking longer than you anticipated and that adding to your workload will eat even further into your limited personal time. As a teacher you will find that learning to say no can be an important lesson.

## Make use of your mentor

Some schools continue the use of mentors for NQTs into their second year but many don't. So make the most of your mentor now. That's what they are there for. Don't try to be too stoical and stand alone. It is not a weakness to ask for help – it is not a weakness to say "I'm struggling here, can you advise me?". It's best to ask for help as soon as a problem arises rather than let it fester and grow. You aren't alone. You have colleagues who care and who were in your shoes once.

## Observations

Many NQTs worry about observations. Try to see these in a positive light – a chance to gain useful feedback. These observations are there to help you, not to trip you up. And remember – you are observed every time you stand in front of a class full of students.

It is important to accept that you will make mistakes. We all do. The person who never made a mistake never made anything else either. It isn't the mistakes we make that matter – it's the learning opportunities they give us.

## Do your worst task first

If you have a list of things to do, such as lesson planning and report writing, do the task you enjoy the least first. Otherwise there is a risk that you will spend too much time on the tasks you enjoy. Set cut-off times too – don't spend too long on one task. And remember, when your workload is as high as it is now, good is good enough.

## Conclusion

You may have found your first term extremely hectic but it will get easier as you get used to it. You're a third of the way through your year and the toughest term is almost behind you. So have a great Christmas and best of luck returning refreshed ready to tackle your next two terms in January.

And please think about calling our free helpline if you are struggling with any aspect of NQT life. Sometimes it can help to talk to someone outside your school or college. We're always here for you.

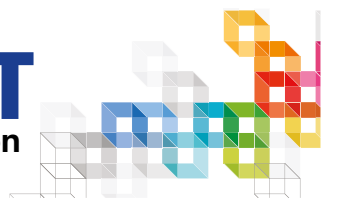
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• *Julian Stanley is CEO of the Education Support Partnership.*

## Further information

For help or advice on any issue facing those working in education, contact the Education Support Partnership's free 24-hour helpline on 08000 562 561 or visit [www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk](http://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk)





What is the secret to fostering a successful working relationship with the teaching assistants who you will undoubtedly be working with in your classroom? **Matt Bromley** offers his 4Cs

**D**uring your teacher training you probably felt like an itinerant, moving from classroom to classroom, and possibly from school to school, as you gained valuable experience by observing lessons, team-teaching with seasoned colleagues and being observed and coached by a mentor.

You may have felt torn between planning, teaching and evaluating your lessons while on placement, and completing course assignments for your teacher trainers.

Being an NQT is, in my experience, easier because there are fewer conflicting demands on your time and attention. You now have but one focus: to teach. You can get to know your school and your classroom, and you can develop long-term relationships with staff and pupils alike.

The fact your pupils know you are sticking around also means they are more likely to behave and work for you – simply put, they know there's no hiding place and you can follow through on any sanctions. It is in their interests as well as yours that you get on and work well together.

As an NQT, you can now set about turning your classroom into your kingdom – it is your domain and you are responsible for building a positive learning environment and an inspiring physical space. You want your pupils to know that as soon as they walk through the door they are on your turf and must follow your rules. Sometimes, however, you will find yourself sharing your turf with another adult, such as a teaching assistant or specialist support teacher. How well you and they manage that relationship is crucial if you are to retain your authority and if you are to become a successful teacher.

So, what is the secret to fostering a successful working relationship with other adults in your classroom? I have developed the 4Cs to help: Consistency, Communication, Clarity, and Connections.

### Consistency

Although it may sound authoritarian and undemocratic, you must remember that it is your classroom and you are in control of it. Of course, in most cases you and your teaching assistant will get on well, have the same high standards and be aligned in your determination that all pupils succeed.

But, if there are differences, you will need to make clear to the other adult that you expect them to follow your lead when it comes to supporting learning and managing behaviour.

As everyone knows, a child will ask one adult and if they don't get the answer they want they will go to another adult and ask the same question, hoping for a different answer. Children are good at "divide and conquer" tactics and will employ them in your classroom if they think they can get a cigarette paper between you and your teaching assistant. If your teaching assistant is more lenient than you, your authority will be undermined and "But they let me do it" will become a familiar refrain.

Consistency doesn't happen by accident: you must cultivate it by being explicit with other adults in your room about what you expect and about what sanctions apply to those pupils who do not meet those expectations. Often, these will be set out in the whole-school behaviour policy and known to everyone, but sometimes you will – by necessity or desire – have your own rules or ways for managing behaviour and it is important that you articulate this to other adults. While your room is your domain, it is also your responsibility – not the teaching assistant's – to make your expectations clear.

As well as being consistent in the way behaviour is managed, you must also be consistent in the ways in which you support pupils with their learning. For example, if you expect pupils to struggle independently with challenges before seeking support, perhaps using the "3b4me" approach (whereby pupils must consult first their brain, their book and then a buddy before asking you for help), then your teaching assistant must also do this. If the teaching assistant proffers answers on first asking, they will undermine your attempts to develop independent learning. As before, it is always your responsibility to articulate your ways of working with your teaching assistant and to reinforce these through your words and actions.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)



# Working with teaching assistants

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proposes a hierarchy of teaching assistant activities that promote pupils' autonomy and independence (based on the work of Bosanquet, Radford & Webster, 2016). Its Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that teaching assistants start with self-scaffolding, which involves the greatest level of pupil independence, then move on to prompting if pupils require more help, followed by clueing, modelling and then correcting.

- Self-scaffolding: Teaching assistants observe, giving pupils time for processing and thinking. Self-scaffolders can: plan how to approach a task, problem-solve as they go and review how they approached a task.
- Prompting: Teaching assistants provide prompts when pupils are unable to self-scaffold. Prompts encourage pupils to draw on their own knowledge, but refrain from specifying a strategy. The aim is to nudge pupils into deploying a self-scaffolding technique. For example: "What do you need to do first? What's your plan? You can do this!"
- Clueing: Often pupils know the strategies or knowledge required to solve a problem, but find it difficult to call them to mind. Clues worded as questions provide a hint in the right direction. The answer must contain a key piece of information to help pupils work out how to move forward. Always start with a small clue.
- Modelling: Prompts and clues can be ineffective when pupils encounter a task that requires a new skill or strategy. Teaching assistants, as confident and competent experts, can model while pupils actively watch and listen. Pupils should try the same step for themselves immediately afterwards.
- Correcting: This involves providing answers and requires no independent thinking. Occasionally it is appropriate to do this, however, teaching assistants should always aim instead to model and encourage pupils to apply new skills or knowledge first.

### Communication

You must ensure that you regularly communicate with

**It is important that teaching assistants know what excellence looks like – what the intended outcomes are and how to attain highly. Communication must be frequent and formal**

your teaching assistant about the lesson content. For example, it is important – if the teaching assistant is to be an effective additional resource in your room – that they know what the learning objectives are, what pupils will be expected to do, and how they will demonstrate their learning by the end of the lesson.

It is important, too, that teaching assistants know what excellence looks like – what the intended outcomes are and how to attain highly. Communication must be frequent and formal. In other words, it must not be left to a chance meeting in the staffroom or corridor; rather, you must carve out a regular slot on the timetable when you can both meet and run through your scheme of work. If your teaching assistant doesn't know what the learning objectives are and what pupils are expected to achieve, then how can they possibly be expected to help?

As a rule of thumb, it is useful if you communicate the following to your teaching assistant before each lesson or sequence of lessons:

- The learning objectives and intended outcomes (what success will look like at the end of the lesson/s and why it matters in terms of the bigger picture).
- The key concepts, knowledge and skills being taught (what pupils need to know and do by the end of the lesson/s).
- The skills and behaviours – including learning behaviours such as metacognition and self-regulation – to be learned, applied, practised or expanded upon during the lesson/s.
- The ways in which pupils' progress will be assessed and the ways in which feedback will be given and acted upon in the lesson/s.

### Clarity

As well as communicating the learning objectives and intended outcomes, you must also make clear what role you want the teaching assistant to play in the lesson.

Often teaching assistants are used as an informal teaching resource for lower-performing pupils or pupils with SEN. However, this approach has been proven to be ineffective – not least by the EEF. Instead, teaching assistants should be used to add value to what teachers do rather than replace the teacher. Although it is common practice, and has gone unquestioned for so long, it now seems obvious that if teaching assistants work with a lower-performing pupil while the teacher teaches the rest of the class, then those pupils most in need of quality teaching miss out and the disadvantage gap widens. If your teaching assistant does have an instructional role to play in your classroom, then it is important that they supplement, rather than replace, you.

To be clear, the expectation should be that the needs of all pupils are addressed, first and foremost, through "quality first teaching" from you – every pupil should have equal access to your expertise. As such, you should try and organise your classroom so that the pupils who struggle most have as much time with you as all the others.

Where your teaching assistant is working individually with lower-performing pupils, the focus should be on retaining access to quality first teaching from you, with the teaching assistant delivering brief, but intensive, structured interventions. Sometimes, it might be that

you work with lower-performing pupils and those in most need while the teaching assistant supports the rest of the class.

Whether the teaching assistant is working with individual pupils or small groups, or with the majority of the class, their role is to help move the learning forward and support pupils to become independent learners. This might involve them:

- Remodelling or re-explaining.
- Scribing for the teacher (on the board) or a pupil.
- Reinforcing instructions and checking understanding.
- Helping pupils to use equipment or resources.
- Encouraging discussion and participation.
- Questioning pupils to challenge them.
- Assessing pupils' learning through observation, questioning and discussion, and checking and clarifying misconceptions.
- Helping to make links between learning in the lesson and other contexts.
- Supporting pupils to identify their next steps in learning and what they need to do to achieve them.

### Connections

If teaching assistants or other adults teach your pupils in your subject by means of additional interventions such as one-to-one or small group withdrawal sessions, it is important that you work with them to make explicit connections between learning from your everyday classroom teaching and these structured interventions.

Interventions are often quite separate from classroom activities and yet interventions only work if learning in these sessions is consistent with, and extends, work inside the classroom and that pupils understand the links between them. It should not be assumed that pupils can consistently identify and make sense of these links on their own. This involves regular communication between you and your teaching assistant, both before and after each lesson or intervention session.

### Conclusion

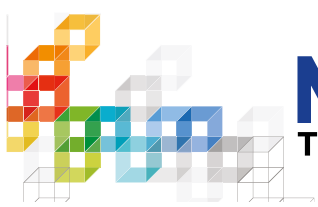
You may find the following questions useful when reflecting on how you work with your teaching assistant:

- How much direction do you provide to the teaching assistant when they are in your lesson? Do you establish clear expectations right from the start?
- How do you ensure the teaching assistant knows exactly what you want them to be doing when they are working with a pupil/group of pupils?
- Does the teaching assistant always work with the pupils with SEN? If so, could they work with a different group or oversee the rest of the class while you focus on the pupils with additional needs?
- If the teaching assistant is working with an SEN pupil, do they encourage them to be independent by providing initial input then moving away from them?
- How do you gather feedback about the pupils' progress from the teaching assistant at the end of a lesson?

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• *Matt Bromley is an education journalist and author with 18 years' experience in teaching and leadership. For Matt's archive of best practice articles for SecEd, visit <http://bit.ly/1Uobmsl>*





Thousands of teachers started their training in September and the ITT year can be just as challenging as life as an NQT. **Adam Riches** offers advice for the trainee-to-NQT journey

**B**eginning your initial teacher training (ITT) is comparable with entering the labyrinth to face the Minotaur. You're going to find the centre eventually but there will be some twists and turns along the way.

So how can you ensure that you make it out of the maze in one piece? There are a number of things that you can do during your ITT year to help you through (some of which are principles that continue to apply to even after you become a "proper teacher").

#### Be open

One of the most important things about training is to be open. Calling upon your mentor or your department for support is something that is encouraged. You should never feel that you can't ask for advice or help with planning, marking/assessment and teaching in general.

Your training provider will give you the knowledge, but often the application is the more difficult task. Make sure that you are open with those around you. You will learn a lot faster if you are because you will address problems more quickly and your trainers will see that you want to do well.

#### Respond to feedback

Lesson observations and mentor meetings in your ITT year allow you to progress rapidly – if they are utilised. Don't be a trainee that has the same targets for five weeks in a row. Actively respond to feedback by adjusting your practice. If you're unsure of how to meet targets, get some observations in the diary or call in some help from a colleague. Actively responding to targets will make your teaching sharper and show your mentor(s) that you are a strong practitioner.

#### Actively participate

Being a passive trainee will create more work for you during your NQT year. If you are actively involved, you will pick up on the wider experiences of teaching. I'm not saying volunteer for every job going – but I am suggesting that you take opportunities and use the experiences to help you grow as a teacher.

For example, having a form group, doing a duty or supporting in classes are all great ways of learning new skills and getting to know pupils quickly. Helping out with a trip, doing some supporting in a club are other



## Beating the ITT maze

Image: Adobe Stock

ways of getting yourself around the school outside of your subject area. Be smart with your time, but don't sit idle either.

#### Be a team player

Giving something back won't go unnoticed. Even though you are a trainee, it is important to integrate yourself into your department and immerse yourself in school life. It is too easy to sit on the sidelines under the guise of being "a trainee". From experience, people are far more likely to help you and take an active interest in helping you progress, if you show that you are a team player. Also, being in the thick of it adds to your self-worth and is a good way to build up your own confidence.

#### Be a radiator not a drain

It is too easy to be influenced by the people on your course who are negative. Being the ray of sunshine will make you a better teacher. In a profession riddled with negativity, as a new teacher you need to grasp the mantle. Being positive about teaching, as well as having a growth mindset, will get you a long way in education. The people who moan about everything are the ones who usually, in my mind, get nothing done.

I'm not saying that there aren't going to be lows and that these should not be acknowledged and discussed, but I think it is really important to radiate positivity and not drain it from people.

#### When September comes

Starting your career as a teacher can be an incredibly daunting prospect. Following a year of training, consisting of support, observations and feedback, it can be a bit of a shock realising that in September it is going to be you and your classes. There are a few things that you need to remember though when your time comes...

#### You know the new tricks

Being an NQT means that you have been exposed to a huge amount of pedagogical knowledge, and most importantly, you've engaged with it recently. New blood in school often reinvigorates others, so don't feel as though your inexperience in years means that you are in any way less valuable than anyone else. To the contrary, you will be one of the most up-to-date teachers on the block, so make sure you give your input where required.

#### You're not expected to know it all

At the same time, the practicalities, routines and nuances of teaching are beasts that you tame as you gain experience. As an NQT, you'll have a mentor and (hopefully) other NQTs in your school or close by. Make sure you use your support networks when you need help figuring out different parts of the job. It's always better to ask than to worry yourself. You really aren't expected to just slot in straight away. For some, it's a matter of weeks, but for others it can take longer.

**Lesson observations and mentor meetings in your ITT year allow you to progress rapidly – if they are utilised. Don't be a trainee that has the same targets for five weeks in a row**

#### There will be dips

From my experience of working with NQTs, there is always a dip or two during the first year. Most commonly, a dip in morale and energy occurs just before Christmas and continues through January. That's not to say there aren't highs and lows all year, it's just that this period in particular is often overwhelming. A combination of marking, fatigue and emotional overload are all things that contribute to dips – but if you're feeling low, remember that it's only a phase.

#### Kids love NQTS

I vividly remember my NQT year and I have to say it was the year I created the strongest bonds with my pupils. Maybe it is the fact that you are making those connections for the first time or it could be something to do with how invested you are. Maybe it's simply that you put in so much time during your first year at the chalkface – whatever it is, students often love having new teachers for their classes.

#### You're learning too

You are a teacher now, but remember that you don't have qualified teacher status. You need to get that first year under your belt before you become a fully fledged teacher with your (proverbial) teaching wings.

Make the most of observations and team-teaching opportunities if they're offered and keep up-to-date with pedagogy. If you get everything perfectly right, you're a miracle worker. Sometimes you'll have hard lessons, sometimes you'll feel you haven't taught your students too well – it's all a learning curve and without a bit of defeat or some tough times, it is harder to better yourself.

Being left to your own devices shouldn't be something to fear. Embrace your new-found freedom and make the most of your first year in teaching. **SecEd**

• *Adam Riches is a lead teacher in English, a Specialist Leader of Education and an ITT coordinator. Follow him on Twitter @TeachMrRiches. Read his previous articles for SecEd at <http://bit.ly/2DhTAJu>*

# Lessons from year 2

Last year's **SecEd** NQT diarist is now in his second year at the chalkface. We asked him to offer his advice to this year's NQT cohort as the end of term one approaches

**T**his time last year, I was in the middle of my first assessment cycle and preparing for my second formal observation, having been given negative feedback during the first due to the quality of my marking. It was a stressful few weeks.

During the past fortnight, I have been preparing my students for their end-of-term assessments, while also undergoing a marking scrutiny and learning walk by senior leaders focused on the use of assessment for learning techniques within the classroom.

Just as death and taxes are the only certainty in life, it sometimes feels like assessments and marking are the only certainties in teaching.

The difference between this year and the last is that this now all feels second nature to me. My assessment dates have been in the diary for weeks, my marking schedule is clearly mapped out and I no longer worry about being observed. Indeed, I get a small thrill when another member of staff enters my classroom, as I am proud of the atmosphere in my lessons and the work being produced.

Your NQT year is likely to be the most discombobulating of your professional life. New teachers are expected to keep up with their workload, absorb huge amounts of information and consistently deliver high-quality lessons.

However, it is also a year full of excitement and new

experiences. Based on my experiences last year, here are my five tips for not just surviving but actively enjoying your NQT year.

#### Don't panic!

There will be times when the mountain of jobs that need completing seems insurmountable, but panicking will be detrimental to all areas of your practice – and simply won't help to get the jobs done.

My organisational skills have improved immeasurably in the past year. At the start of each term, I dedicate time to getting my head around all approaching deadlines. This helps to put things into perspective and allows me to prioritise the most time-sensitive tasks. The work will get done as long as you stay calm and keep chipping away at your to-do list – never expecting it to be finished, rather a work in progress.

#### Build relationships

I have been at my school for over a year and have made some fantastic friends. After a tough day, it is the support of my colleagues that makes me realise how lucky I am to work in a school full of kind and funny practitioners. Teachers need to support each other in the most difficult circumstances, and building friendships with colleagues is the best way to ensure this.

Teachers must also work hard to build positive relationships with their students. Until mutual respect has been established, no meaningful learning can take

place. To build this respect, set and maintain firm expectations of your pupils.

Take an interest in each individual. Students don't care if you've been teaching for one year or three decades – if they respect you, they will work hard in your lessons.

Although it can be daunting communicating with parents (especially if the reason for doing so is negative), there must be consistent dialogue between home and school. I have found that even the most difficult parents can be won over once they realise that you have their child's best interests at heart.

#### Ask for help

Some professionals worry that "asking for help" shows weakness. The opposite is true. When struggling, it is easy to suffer in silence, hoping that things will miraculously get better. Put simply, they won't – unless you ask for help.

NQTS must actively seek support from colleagues. Most will be very busy with their own workload and may be oblivious to your difficulties through no fault of

their own. It is only by asking for support that you will be given it.

#### Get involved

During your NQT year, it is easy to focus solely on meeting the Teachers' Standards. This is a mistake. Schools are buzzing with activity and it is important for NQTS to get involved. My advice is to seek out additional responsibilities. I organised and led a residential trip to Poland during my NQT year. Some colleagues worried that I was taking on too much work, but I knew that I was capable. As long as you are comfortable with the additional work, your NQT year is a great opportunity to contribute to the wider school community.

#### Look after yourself

Staff wellbeing is a key concern for many schools. Although senior leaders must make the wellbeing of their staff a priority, it is also up to the individual to ensure that they are looking after their own physical and mental health.

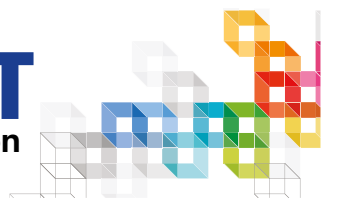
Life in school is so fast-paced that it is easy to neglect yourself. I struggled with my work/life balance throughout my NQT year. However, by eventually recognising this, I was able to tackle the problem head on and make sure that I made time for life outside school.

Once you have achieved a good work/life balance, the job itself becomes much easier. You must find time to switch off as every day will bring new challenges, but also triumphs.

NQTS need to make sure that they are well rested, positive and happy – only then will you be able to tackle each challenge and relish each triumph as they occur. **SecEd**

• *The author of this article is a second-year teacher of history at a comprehensive school in the North of England. He was the author of SecEd's Diary of an NQT column last year. To read the weekly column, visit <http://bit.ly/2K0xABK>*





In a period of dark mornings, darker nights, budget cuts and teacher workload, **Sean Harris** – with a little help from Charles Dickens and a few others – considers how NQTs might achieve levels of optimism and prioritise their development and progress as a teacher in their NQT year

*"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone ... a squeezing, wrenching, gasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!"*

So wrote Charles Dickens in 1843 of the character Scrooge, who has since become associated with our festive season of repentance and redemption.

### The Ghost of NQT Past

In a Christmas Carol, the first spirit – the Ghost of Christmas Past – reminds a miserable Scrooge of a period of innocence in his life by taking him back to see his time as a child.

Scrooge is challenged to contemplate his loneliness at boarding school and the ways in which he was treated by his beloved sister and an employer who looked on him like a son. It is easy to lose sight of the person we once we were and the life experiences that have shaped the character we are today.

Likewise, as an NQT it is easy to lose sight of how far we have come at the expense of what we still need to learn. It is understandable for NQTs to feel overwhelmed by the volume of new information, processes and systems.

Debbie King, lead practitioner at the Extol Learning Trust in the North East, said: "I wish someone had told me that it was okay not to know everything. I came to recognise the need to get into the staffroom once a day and to make sure that I spoke with other colleagues within the school regularly as a way of reminding myself that we were in the same boat together."

Timely conversations with colleagues, both negative and positive, can help you to appreciate the progress you are making and to seek support readily as and when it is needed. Sharing the journey with others, much like Scrooge did with the Ghost of Christmas Past, can help you to realise that you are not facing these events on your own. The NQT mentor plays a critical role here, however it is important for NQTs to widen their network of support beyond that of their mentor as well.

### The Ghost of NQT Present

For Scrooge, the Ghost of Christmas Present pushes him much further than that of the previous ghost. It is the Ghost of Christmas Present that wants Scrooge to open his eyes and to understand the world in which he exists – the injustice surrounding the poor and the impact that Scrooge can have within this world.

It is imperative that NQTs build around them a network of colleagues and friends that can remind them of their purpose as a teacher and the impact that they can have, especially on the lives of disadvantaged children.

Martin Atkinson, assistant headteacher at Stopsley High School in Luton, said: "Build a network of support with other NQTs or new staff across the school. Organise marking or planning parties with them, whether they teach your subject or not, it can be quite cathartic to see that other teachers have similar thought processes and trials as you."

"It is also good to have critical friends to bounce ideas off and challenge your thinking. Collaborative planning can be a powerful tool to drive on your teaching and make you reflect on the impact of your lessons."

Be prepared to share the journey with others who will remind you of those that you serve. It may, as Scrooge discovers, be uncomfortable at times or involve occasional feedback that you don't want to (initially) hear, but it can enable you to have a much more significant impact as somebody that is new to the mission of teaching.

### The Ghost of NQT Future

Scrooge is almost a broken man by the time the Ghost of Christmas Future takes a journey with him. The spirit appears to Scrooge as a character in a black cloak and communicates with him by pointing at him and through Scrooge's inner-monologue. The



future is bleak for Scrooge if he is unprepared to change his wicked ways.

On the relentless treadmill of teaching and with continuous pressures facing the wider world of education beyond their classroom, it is easy for an NQT to form a bleak picture of the future of the profession and their own career.

However, having a positive mindset towards the future and considering the impact that is still

that this project is small enough so that they don't feel burnt-out or stressed about the extra responsibility in an already complex year of competing demands and workload. However, leading a small aspect of a development plan can help expose you to the strategies and methods that are required for future middle and senior leadership in schools, if this is the way you think you want to go.

This approach enabled Laura – who is a graduate

**“Build a network of support with other NQTs or new staff across the school. Organise marking or planning parties with them, whether they teach your subject or not, it can be quite cathartic to see that other teachers have similar thought processes and trials as you”**

yet to come in your career can be a helpful way of considering the future leader of learning that you want to become – and the teacher that you set out to be.

Laura Dixon, director of modern foreign languages at Benton Park School in Leeds, made the transition from trainee teacher to a middle leader and believes NQTs interested in this career path should consider taking on a small project in their first year.

She explained: "Take on a very specific, very manageable part of the faculty or department development plan and lead a small-scale project around it. Get really used to the plan – do – review cycle of implementation."

"The conversations and meetings you will have with the current head of department (as part of this work) will give a great insight into what middle leadership is about."

NQTs, she continues, should be careful to ensure

of Ambition School Leadership's Teaching Leaders development programme – to lead a small-scale project that launched some new ideas while also facilitating her working alongside different colleagues, which helped to develop her own leadership skills.

Part of constructing your future trajectory to leadership as an NQT involves knowing where your blind spots are and beginning to make a list or conduct an inner-audit of those areas where you know you need more support.

This can help new teachers, in any setting, to be clear about their areas of development and it enables them to build their confidence in those areas of the role that tend to make them feel anxious or pressured.

Laura Kirkland, curriculum leader of humanities at Unity City Academy in Middlesbrough, said that one of the core areas of development for her NQTs has been that of learning to understand

how to read and analyse data. Laura – also a Teaching Leaders graduate – has used software such as SISRA Analytics to help NQTs identify the underperforming pupils in their classes and then to use this data to inform conversations about how they can identify and tackle their barriers to learning.

She said: "Use data to inform your conversations with your mentor and with colleagues. If you don't understand it easily, don't be afraid to ask for advice or support. The most effective teachers do this consistently."

### Peace on NQT earth

*"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the past, the present, and the future. The spirits of all three shall strive within me."*

So declares a reformed Scrooge by the end of Dickens' redemptive story. Scrooge is ready to embrace any challenge that life throws his way and is committed to serving communities of disadvantage.

By the end of the NQT year, teachers should also seek to hold this same spirit of optimism, determination and resilience. Below are some more pointers from our Christmas advisors.

### 'What the Dickens'

Some further advice from Martin Atkinson at Stopsley High School (@bealfirste\_AFC):

- Organise visits to other similar departments in other local schools and develop a network to share ideas and resources. Social media is also a great place for this.
- Read leadership and teaching periodicals and books. There are currently an abundance of good leadership books available focusing on education. Most of these books are written by educators who have been through the journey and they offer practical advice and tips.
- Teaching can be a tough gig, and as teachers we are probably some of the worst people for dwelling on the negatives. Ensure that you reflect on each day by thinking about how you've made a difference, who you have helped and what good deeds you have done. These will most certainly outnumber the disappointments of the day.

### 'Bah Humbug!'

Some further advice from Laura Dixon at Benton Park School (@LDlleeds):

- Seek out and keep the positive pupil voice of why they feel proud of their progress and experiences in your subject.
- When it is dark and miserable with all the deadlines looming and it is all a bit too overwhelming, the thank you cards and the reflection of "I'm proud of what I've done today because..." from just one child makes me remember that I do the most important job in the world.
- More practically, remember you're human, you're fallible and you're at the beginning of a wonderful journey where you will get tonnes wrong every day. So don't beat yourself up, seek advice where you can, and remember that not every day can be good, but there can be good in every day. Your job as an NQT is to find those glimpses of good and build on them.

### Face the challenge

When having observations, don't pick the easy lessons. Your worst lessons can become your best lessons – so believes Deborah Basket, assistant principal and ITT lead at Excelsior Academy in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (@MrsMathia).

So, pick the classes that challenge you the most, because these classes provide a fabulous opportunity for some serious mentoring, development and progress.

### Final chapter

*"And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!"*

Dickens leaves us with this image of Scrooge. Likewise, throughout your NQT year, you have the potential to have a positive impact not only on the lives of disadvantaged children but across your entire school community and the lives of the colleagues that serve in these communities with you.

Just remember to make sure that you enjoy a well-earned break over the festive period and have a happy new year!

SecEd

• Sean Harris is a former deputy headteacher and NQT. He is North East area director for Ambition School Leadership and chair of governors at James Calvert Spence College in Northumberland. You can give him a festive follow at @SeanHarris\_asl





It can be too easy to procrastinate over every single detail of our lessons, especially when we are new to teaching. **Martin Matthews** urges NQTs to trust their instincts. He explains why we should let ourselves switch off in order to switch on...

**Y**ou're behind the wheel of a car, driving down a road – or at least you were. You are now somewhere else in your mind, in the middle of a conversation with a colleague, talking to a family member about something you should have spoken to them about last week, or thinking about how you're going to mend the hole in the kitchen roof.

Suddenly you realise you're back in the car and you've no memory of driving along the previous two miles. It's a route you often take. It's a road you've driven before. It's not dangerous, as such, if you had needed to "wake up" you would have easily done so at the sight of a brake light ahead, a wayward pedestrian or an escaped farmyard animal.

You're in a sort of driving sleep; the motorway has mesmerised you, the winding curves of the B road have sent you into a sort of dream state or the brake lights of despair ahead have guided you into a traffic jam dream – a highway hypnosis...

### Classroom dreams

How often do we "drive" our classrooms like this? Have you ever been teaching and found yourself stepping outside of yourself for a moment and hearing your voice talking about a topic – "hey, that sounds alright", you think, "I actually sound like I know what I am talking about", then you realise that you better get back inside your mind again quickly before you forget what you were saying?

Or, have you ever looked at a fully timetabled day in the morning and then found yourself at the end of the day with no solid recollection of how you got there?

You know that lessons took place as you have the battle scars of board marker pen on your hand, a half-drunk cup of coffee on your desk and detritus of battle piled up in the form of left over worksheets and a stack of marking the size of Ben Nevis for you to work through. Were you asleep? Did you dream it all, or were you just caught in the flow of a teaching day?

It's an age-old analogy, but teaching is like driving a car. When you learn to drive you have to remember so many things. The need to check your mirrors at the correct times, timing the clutch and gear changes correctly and ensuring your hands are always at "10 and two".

Many people report that when they learn to drive they are tense and they can't relax; the mind is focused on the new things it has to learn and implement and you are very aware that you are being watched and judged.

In time, when we pass our driving tests, we start to relax. We do things more naturally. We don't worry about every single detail all of the time. Some people may argue that this makes us worse drivers. Perhaps, but we are at least more experienced – we are able to switch off and let our experience take over. Is teaching and working in a school that dissimilar?

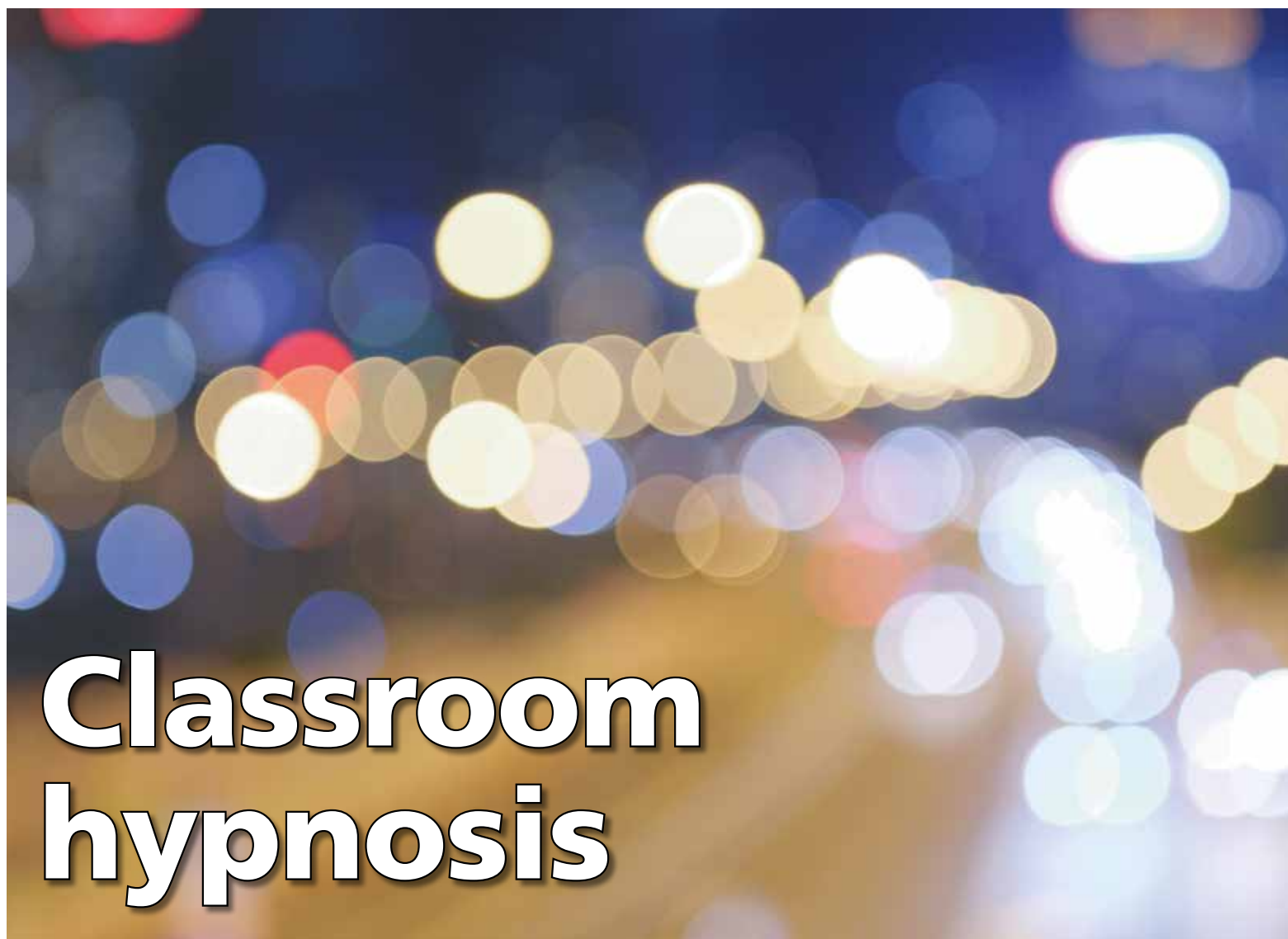
### Learner teachers

First of all, I am not advocating not planning lessons, or not thinking about the path you are taking your students down. It is clear that all departments need carefully thought-out long-term plans that take into account the key skills and general areas of focus that need to be covered across the school year.

With that, there is clearly need to think about medium-term planning in regards to how you will support students to meet the goals and address the new skills outlined in the long-term plan. Finally, there obviously needs to be short-term planning that considers how you will deploy the various resources in order to teach your lessons and reach your medium and long-term goals.

Teachers are also well aware of the need to demonstrate pupil progress, employing understanding of the various data available alongside key information in terms of students' educational needs. However, once we have done this, how do we deliver our lessons and how do we function during the school day to better serve both our wellbeing and the progress of students?

When you learn to teach it is like learning to drive, you have to remember to do so many things at once – create your lesson plan, differentiate, clearly outline learning parameters, and ensure all of your students are making progress through well-thought-out feedback.



# Classroom hypnosis

As such, many trainee teachers and NQTs I have mentored report that, like learner drivers, they are often tense and can't relax in the classroom or around the school. Even though they are "driving" their lessons perfectly, they are not at ease. In schools, there seems to be so many things to manage all at once that many teachers, from NQTs to experienced colleagues, feel they are always on a driving test.

Is there some worth in finding a sort of school hypnosis? Do we need to switch off, in order to switch on?

### Trust your instincts

Picture the scene: you have got your long-term, medium-term and short-term plans in place. You have your seating plan ready, with key information about each young person clearly labelled. You've got your

room in dribs and drabs, ask them how they are and find out a bit about their day.

There may well be a starter activity on the desk for them, but take time to start with some pleasantries. It's nice to be nice. In a sea of data, stats and progress measures it can sometimes become muddled as to what you're there to do.

There are a number of targets to hit every lesson, but fundamentally you are there to teach and work with human beings. If students are relaxed and you are relaxed, then the mind should be better ready to learn and take in new information. I appreciate that there's an argument for not letting your students to become too relaxed, but stress doesn't help anyone.

### Take the time to read

I once suggested this to an NQT and he gave me a look that simply said "when?"

But don't make reading a special event, incorporate it into your daily life. Carry a book around with you. Take five to 10 minutes to switch off and focus on something else (the book can be education-based or not). This time can sometimes be found in those few minutes when you might be waiting for something – i.e. a meeting to start, a student to arrive for a detention, or your computer to reboot for the fifth time in a row. When you mentally "come back" into the school space, you will likely feel better.

Taking a moment to enjoy a spot of fresh air can have the same effect. Could you walk into the school building from your car a slightly longer way? Do you get the train or bus into work for once and enjoy the opportunity to see something different? There is nothing wrong with giving your mind a break and allowing your mind and body a chance to slow down.

Take time to exercise. It's well documented that one of the best ways to combat stress, or to relax, is to undertake regular exercise. This can be anything from running to a brisk walk after work. If you go from a busy teaching day to busy home life (possibly with further school work to complete) with no "escape" or release, then this can contribute to greater stress levels.

As you take a walk, go for a run or ride your unicycle down the street, let your mind take in the sights and sounds around you. If you start to think about work, put your thoughts straight back on your surroundings – what sights and sounds can you take in and notice? Try not to let the weather put you off! Maybe the rain will do you some good. If you practise this regularly you will find that your mind is then better focused to finish off the work you have left, get a good night's sleep or enjoy time with friends and family.

### Breathe

You might have a pile of work on the desk. You know you have a number of emails to respond to. Remember to breathe. A relaxed individual breathes between six and eight times a minute. If you focus on slowing your breathing for a moment, you will relax and be better prepared to prioritise what needs doing first and to decide what can be completed later or the next day. If you are having trouble slowing breathing, try the following:

- Breathe in and count to five.
- Hold your breath for about two seconds.
- Let the breath out slowly for roughly seven seconds.
- Repeat.

The pile of work will not have disappeared, but you might be in a better state of mind to address it.

### Acceptance

Try not to judge people, be it your colleagues or students. Sometimes we just have to let things go and accept that they are the way they are. We can fix many things as teachers (indeed, we are expected to sometimes fix what seems unfixable), but some things just need to be left alone.

Alongside that we must consider how we come across to others. We know this is particularly important in our role as we communicate with young people and their parents every day, but this needs to be extended to colleagues. Make sure you concentrate on engaging and listening – stay in that moment, try not to worry about the rest of the lesson, the meeting or parent phone call.

### Ride the worry waves

Sometimes our worries can seem like they are the most important thing in the world. The reality is that most likely they will not last forever. Imagine riding on the top of a wave and then drifting down the other side. We sometimes need to ride our worries and concerns and go with the flow.

In terms of balancing up workload, staying in school every day until 6pm or working at home until 11pm does not make you a better teacher. A wise person once said to me: "When faced with what seems like a big task, it's not really a big task, it's just lots of little jobs." Sometimes it's about finding the first little job and focusing on that.

At the end of the school day it's important that you take stock of what you've done. As you walk out of the school building, try to list three things that have gone well that day, or that you are pleased about. Sometimes these could be big things, such as a student achieving an improved grade, or a class that you teach making significant progress.

However, there is as much worth in thinking about the little things that have gone well, this is especially important on a difficult day. There is always something that has gone well in day – seriously, even if that was that cup of coffee and chat with a colleague, or the student who held a door open for you. Find something positive in every day.

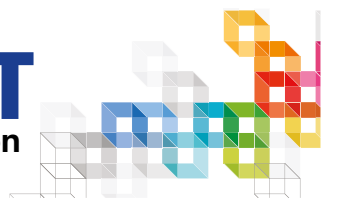
### Conclusion

We need to trust in our ability to "drive" our school life while keeping in mind the various aspects of the teacher highway code. Teaching is a busy and difficult career, but it is also a rewarding one. We know we have to work hard for our students, but sometimes to get the best out of ourselves we need to switch off in order to switch on.

SecEd

• *Martin Matthews is an experienced secondary school teacher in Cheshire. Read his previous articles for SecEd at <http://bit.ly/2Fi0G15>*





# New tricks from an old dog

There are some teaching basics that never change. In these articles, **Roy Watson-Davis** offers some tried and tested tips

**M**ore than 10 years ago I wrote regular advice articles for an education publication under the headline above. Well, I'm even older now and these aren't so much new tricks, but more like old wine in new bottles. Hopefully the ideas below will help you rethink your classroom practice.

## Meet your class at the door

This is useful for any combination of the following.

- It sets the immediate tone – you are there and ready to work, the pupils should be too.
- It allows controlled entry into the room and minimises disruption.
- It allows you to oversee your section of corridor (and the more teachers who do this, the better corridor behaviour becomes as it establishes what all pupils secretly love – a routine).
- It allows you to interact with each pupil with a simple “hello” or “how are you?”.
- It allows you to quickly see who may be a bit “off” or fraught and manage them early in the lesson.
- It gives the chance for pupils to chat to you.

## An immediate activity

Have something for pupils to do the moment they enter the room. Once they cross the line into your classroom make them value it from the very first minute. Do not fritter away the first five minutes or so taking a register – this practically invites conflict and disagreement.

Set a simple task and take the register as the class engages with the task. Behaviour management starts

with learning. You want a bad start or time wasted? Then line them up and read a list of names at them.

## Behaviour

Don't give the pupils a space to misbehave. See above. Lining up and registers can easily create the space for low-level misbehaviour. Likewise not having a set routine for things such as book distribution or retrieval. Pupils are perfectly capable of doing all this while the rest of the class settle to the first task. However, if it is the teacher doing this while the class waits with nothing to do then you will create a misbehaviour space. Close it off.

Similarly, teacher absence causes a space for misbehaviour – the obvious one is late arrival, but the more insidious is the space created when a teacher doesn't “tour” a room while teaching. Misbehaviour often starts in these “spaces” where the teacher rarely (or in some cases, never) visits. Again, move around to close off these spaces.

## The role of marking

Marking is primarily a behaviour management tool – if you don't mark regularly you run the risk of creating behaviour problems. This is due to a number of reasons:

- Pupils are very sensitive to picking up if they are valued – unmarked work goes down very badly as it can be interpreted by the pupil as the teacher failing to acknowledge or value their efforts.
- Over time the quality of work and effort will tail off if the time between marking lengthens.
- Marking allows praise and dialogue and the development of in-lesson relationships.
- Marking allows better planning for pupil needs, as you will know how the pupils are grasping

the learning. The space between what you are teaching and how the pupils are understanding it will narrow.

Not checking where pupils are in relation to where you are taking them is a recipe for behaviour disaster. If you are sailing down the M1 while your pupils are stuck in a jam on the A30, then expect behaviour issues.

Misbehaviour “space” is not just a physical space, but a learning one too. The bigger the space between where you think the class is and where students actually are, the more potential for discontentment, disengagement or misbehaviour.

## Manage yourself

Teaching is a craft and within that craft is the teaching persona that you create. Giving too much of the “real” you in the classroom is a recipe for stress and heightened emotional responses, burn-out and fatigue.

Make sure you manage the character that you create for your teaching. A good benchmark is whether you get genuinely angry with pupils – if so, back off, as you are investing too much of yourself.

Act angry by all means – in some situations it is what the pupils expect – but keep it at that, acting. If you go home rejoicing because you defeated a 14-year-old in a shouting match, take a look in the mirror.

Likewise “caring” – by all means create an image of caring as it is terribly important that the pupils buy into this, but be careful not to over commit.

Again if you find yourself almost reduced to tears on a regular basis by what pupils are going through, rethink how much of yourself you “give away”. Too much can be career-ending.

## At the end of the day

Remind yourself it is just a job – very rewarding if it makes you happy, but if it makes you unhappy then try something else.

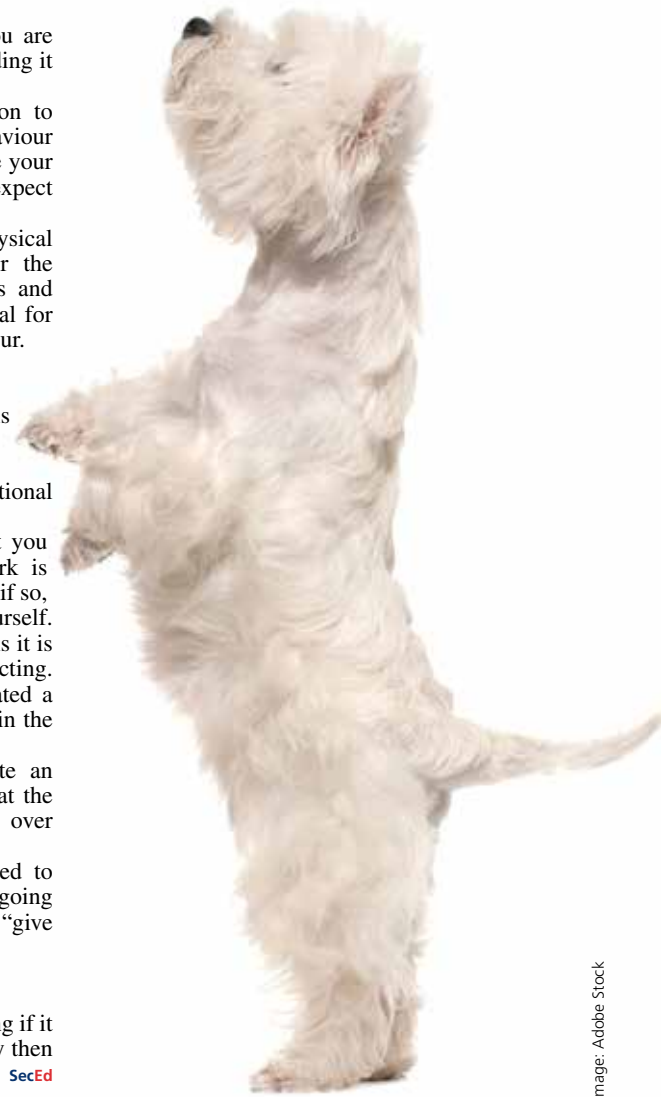


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# The various bridges of teaching

**T**he article above spent some time talking about “spaces” that allow for behaviour management problems and how to close them off. This one is largely about “bridges” and how to build better relationships with pupils and also better lessons.

## Building bridges

Taking over a form can be quite daunting/exciting/secondary in your list of priorities (delete as appropriate). But however you feel, there are a few simple tricks you can use to build bridges.

First, get a list of birthdays and buy some cheap cards and bars of chocolate. If someone has already had their birthday over the summer it is absolutely ideal. In the first tutor time distribute card(s) and chocolate to the summer birthday pupils. It will set the tone immediately and build a bridge immediately – both to those pupils and also the future recipients.

Second, make sure you connect the days of your tutor time to help build relationships. For example, every second Friday you might ask the pupils to jot down some reflections on how the intervening school time has gone. Take these in and read them – it will help you to ensure that tutor lessons bridge these gaps. It also helps to build relationships and routines.

## Bridging corridor and room

Be careful that there is no disconnect with behaviour “out there” and “in here”. The two areas should connect with similar behaviour routines – so as in the article above, stand at your door to ensure this happens.

Likewise connect the learning space outside with the entry point. So displaying work around or outside the door would be useful. This should start them learning/thinking about learning before they go through the door. Displaying work on the inside of the entry point reinforces this. And also on at least the first classroom wall that comes into view upon entry.

I once had work on the walls and ceiling of the corridor to my room, on the door inside and out, and then on the walls and ceiling of the teaching room. In effect, one massive bridge connecting corridor to classroom (I realise that in some schools ownership of buildings doesn't allow this, ditto schools with obsessions with designated display boards).

## Behaviour bridges

Proximity of the teacher is a key way of building bridges towards pupils. If you stay predominantly at

the front of your room, think about the consequences for those pupils who rarely get to interact with you at close quarters. If you find that the pupils at the back are misbehaving, think how you created the zone and space for this (see article above).

If you have occasion to discipline a pupil, at some point, later that day, perhaps around the school if you see them, have a kind word or gesture to build a bridge back to normal relations.

## Burning bridges

To truly emerge as a teacher you need to burn your own bridges. Bridge one is your default style. It is probably the mode of teaching that attracted you to your subject when you were at school. However, is it always the best approach?

You achieved in your subject at school and probably

enjoyed the teaching, you also engaged with similar approaches at university – for example listening in lectures, making notes etc. However, if you don't burn those bridges, you will end up teaching to a rapt audience of about five or six pupils in a class of 30.

All those bridges narrow your ability to enthuse and develop all pupils who are in your lessons. Most pupils don't learn the way you did, are ambivalent towards your subject, and won't do as well at school (or enjoy it) as you did. Until you burn your own bridges and emerge from the smoke, you will not really develop as a teacher of all pupils.

## The professional bridge

Think of where you want to be professionally as your experience grows. A good idea is to think “in one year's time, in three years' time, and in five years'

time”. Build bridges towards those aims by seeking out key people to mentor you/courses to go on/clear paths to follow. Link the “you” now with the “you” further down the line.

You should also do this with the pupils so they too can build bridges towards future learning. Open-ended learning for pupils can feel like a pointless process to some, but exploring future opportunities – what they will study, or looking towards pupil goals like sixth form and university/Apprenticeship/employment – will help to give learning new value.

• Roy Watson-Davis is head of history and politics at the Royal Hospital School in Holbrook. He is also author of the *Creative Teaching, Form Tutor, and Lesson Observation Pocketbooks*. You can read his previous articles for SecEd at <http://bit.ly/2FwO59H>



Image: Adobe Stock





SecEd's NQT diarist writes every week detailing the trials and tribulations from her first year at the chalkface. Here, she looks back on her first term at the successes, failures and lessons learned...

I can't quite believe that we are (almost) a third of the way through the year.

As the climax of the first term draws ever closer, I would like to sum up a range of things that have gone well since September – and also some things that have not gone so well! Hopefully, there are some commonalities between your experiences and mine.

I am also thinking ahead to next term when I want to give myself some manageable goals to focus on. I think this is really important. I find that it is quite easy to get caught up in the classroom routine and forget that there is still lots of personal development and growth for me to gain this year.

#### What went well?

Let's begin with the positives. What do I feel that I've achieved? Well, I think my classroom management is finally a strength. I know my routines and expectations and I'm finding that implementing them has become second nature.

I'm really pleased with this, because I do believe that it is such an important factor in successful teaching. When I manage a good working environment, it usually (although not always!) leads to a really good lesson. Of course, I still struggle with some students in terms of behaviour, but I'd say that generally my students know the boundaries of acceptability in my classroom.

That is the positive side of having such a long autumn term – plenty of time to embed routines. Now let's hope that I can maintain it after the holidays...

I have also worked really hard this term to introduce some extra-curricular activities into the department. I have been keeping an eye out for local debating groups and national creative writing competitions.

I have managed to get quite a few students on board with this and it has been lovely to extend my skills beyond the classroom. I've worked with students who I wouldn't normally teach, which has been great for establishing my identity in the school. It's also lovely to see genuine enthusiasm from students who love and appreciate the subject you teach; there's nothing like this to raise your spirits after battling with grumpy, defiant teenagers all day!

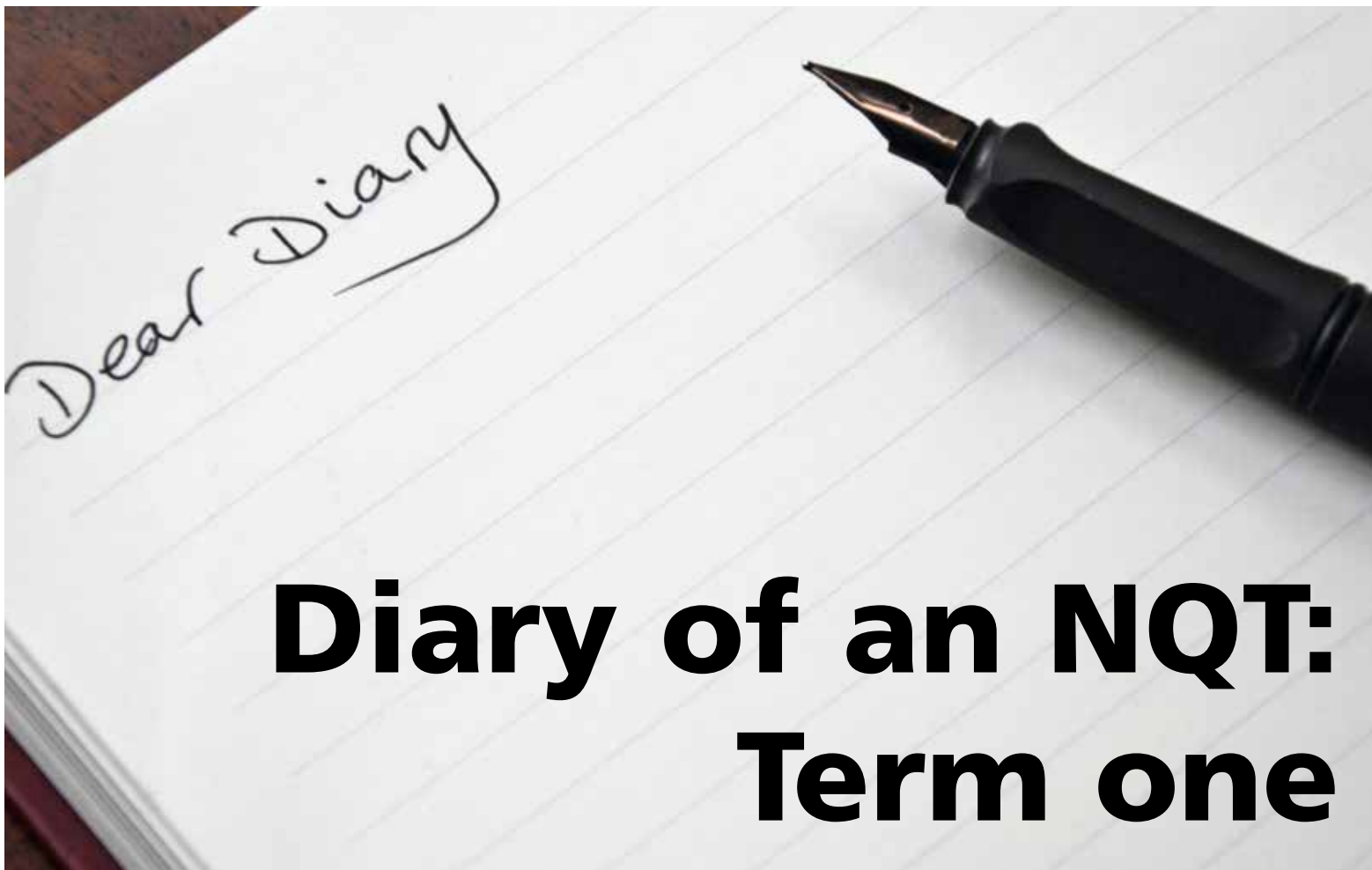


Image: Adobe Stock

# Diary of an NQT: Term one

#### Challenges

Now, in terms of difficulties I would say that managing a form group is certainly at the top of my list. I can honestly say that at the present moment, the teaching part of my job is the easiest!

I completely underestimated the energy it takes to manage a group of 30 or so 11-year-olds. The role of the tutor is completely different and I am required to switch into and out of this multiple times in the day.

It's been really quite difficult to manage and keep track of a range of needs and it has required constant communication between myself and other subject teachers and also the parents of my tutees (although this has actually been quite useful in "breaking the ice" and getting to know colleagues across the school). I'm still grappling with the role, but I do hope I'm doing it some justice.

I am also still struggling with the time I am spending on my lesson planning. I am still getting constant reminders from my mentor not to reinvent the wheel – I'm unquestionably guilty of this.

However, the problem is, I actually enjoy planning lessons. And while it is great that there are so many platforms for sharing resources, I almost feel that if I haven't sat down and designed/tweaked

the lesson myself, I struggle to deliver it. Having said that, I still don't believe in flowery resources and PowerPoints. I think I just need to focus on the balance and ask myself "what's the impact of this?" and "is this going to maximise the learning?" before spending two hours in front of my computer each evening.

I'm definitely seeing improvements in relinquishing all the unnecessary control and reducing the time that I spend planning, but it's still a work in progress.

#### Planning for term two

Thinking ahead, I am prioritising some things in order to keep myself afloat. As soon as January hits, it is mock season at our school. This means serious marking that I already fear will take over my life for a short period.

Some of you may already be in the throes of this, so you're already champions in my eyes. From what I can remember from my ITT year, it's a massive undertaking. The stress – with the ominous ability to spread itself around the department – can be almost contagious.

However, I refuse to worry or let it spoil the festivities over the holidays, so I'm utilising different

feedback for assessment procedures to make sure I'm managing my exercise books and summative assessments from now until then.

In addition to this, I'm prioritising my CPD sessions. My school's CPD is structured superbly and we can choose a range of topics to explore at the beginning of the year. These range from opportunities to visit other schools to more focused sessions on behaviour, SEN and feedback. It covers pretty much everything an NQT could need.

I'm really lucky in this respect, and I'm actually looking forward to these extra sessions. I've picked a topic that focuses specifically on dyslexia. This is something I haven't really been exposed to as much as I'd like. I have a few dyslexic students who I'm working tirelessly with, but I want to make sure they are making adequate progress and ensure that the methods I am using are helping them address the specific issues rather than just providing temporary solutions. This is a huge priority for me, as it's something that I still lack a lot of a confidence with.

SecEd

• Our NQT diarist this year is an English teacher at a comprehensive school in the Midlands. You can read her weekly entries via <http://bit.ly/2K0xABK>

NQTS will encounter a range of SEN in their classrooms. One common condition is ADHD. Sarah Long offers some quick pointers

What do you do with the child who does not fit in the box – think outside the box.

All teachers have taught children who just don't fit into a school environment. They are the pupils who can't sit still or stay in their seats, who do things on the spur of the moment without any idea of the possible consequences. They are usually bright but never demonstrate their full potential because of their lack of focus and their behaviour takes up your time, attention and frustrates you, while disrupting the other children's learning.

If all of the above sounds familiar you are probably teaching some children with ADHD – whether they have been diagnosed by a health care professional or not. Schools are scary or tough places for these children. Just think about what we ask them to do on a daily basis: stay in their seat, keep still, stop fidgeting, pay attention, listen to my instructions, follow my instructions – the list of demands are endless and difficult to achieve if your brain makes it hard for you to comply.

As teachers, with all the demands placed on us, it is sometimes easy to fall into the trap of trying the same old thing over and over again, expecting the pupils to miraculously change their behaviours if we just keep

going until they give in. What we really know is that if something is not working for a pupil we need to change what we are doing.

Sometimes, the smallest things can make the biggest difference and change how children with ADHD view themselves, the school and the people around them.

Something as simple as making one of your pupils with ADHD book monitor, so that they have a chance to get up and move around without being told off, can be a turning point for that child. Here are some other simple strategies:

- Greet me at the door so you know what kind of mood I'm in.
- Give me a job so I can get out of my seat without being told off.
- Give me something to fiddle with so I don't end up annoying other children.
- Give me a timer so I know how long I have to concentrate for.
- Think about where I am sitting so I have less chance of getting distracted.
- Use my name to get my attention and to prompt me with tasks.
- Give me a visual timetable and remind me what is happening next.
- Use a calm voice when you speak to me so I stay calm too.
- Let me go for a walk or take a message if I need a timeout.
- Give me lots of positives so I don't think I'm just a naughty child who is always in trouble.
- Give me visual cues so the other children don't think I'm being told off all the time.

# ADHD in your classroom



Image: Adobe Stock

- Use something I like as a reward for my hard work.
- Give me immediate rewards and consequences as I don't understand if you wait until tomorrow.
- Try and include my interests in lessons that I find difficult.
- Give me a clear idea of how much work you want me to do.
- Use humour to distract me from doing the wrong thing.
- Make me feel that you like me (I always feel that I am the child no-one likes).

The best way to support a child with ADHD is to have a positive attitude towards them, make them feel part of the class and encourage them to want to engage in learning in a way they can fit in. If we can do that then we can be the proud teacher that tells a friend "I taught that amazing person" when they go on to be an entrepreneur, sports person or famous actor! SecEd

• Sarah Long is assistant headteacher and SENCO at Gilbrook School in Birkenhead, a maintained special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

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