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Early career teachers: Surviving and thriving

Welcome to our regular supplement for early career teachers and those who support them. This time, we look at the Early Career Framework, how the new two-year induction period will work, and offer advice on CPD, wellbeing and general good practice for new teachers. We also look at effective mentoring, offering advice for both the mentors and the mentees...



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ECF: What you should receive

As the Early Career Framework rolls-out this September, what entitlements and support should it give for early career teachers beginning their careers at the chalkface?

New teachers make a big jump from being trainees to being responsible for their own classes, performing a crucial role in children's lives. The national roll-out of the Early Career Framework (ECF) this September marks a significant change to new teacher induction in England, as it increases from three to six terms and offers new teachers CPD to support them as they begin their careers.

For teachers who have started and paused induction this academic year or earlier, a one-year induction can be completed by September 2023. After that date, six terms of induction will be needed.

Articles later in this special supplement look at the details of the ECF (pages 4-5) as well as the two-year induction and the roles and responsibilities of all those involved (pages 6-8). Here, I want to consider your entitlements under the ECF and what to do if you are not receiving them.

A supportive measure

The government has billed the changes – and the NEU expects them to be – a supportive measure, allowing ECTs more time to show they fully meet the *Teachers' Standards*, as well as giving structured support from a programme that aims to encourage and engender a career-long culture of mentoring and professional development.

The ECF entitles new teachers to two years of a CPD programme and support from a school-based mentor, as well as five per cent extra time off timetable in the second year, following on from the usual 10 per cent in the first year.

In school, there will be an induction tutor for the formal parts of the process as well as an induction mentor, who will work closely with you on your classroom practice and all aspects of planning, assessment and lesson delivery.

No impact on pay

The Department for Education has

stated that “a two-year induction will have no adverse impact upon ECTs’ pay or career progression opportunities. ECTs will still be able to progress on the pay scale as current arrangements allow, both during and after induction” (DfE, 2021). If a teacher believes that their school has or is likely to deny progression at the end of the first year, they should contact their trade union for advice.

Structured CPD

The biggest change is the structured CPD programme that will run for two years, covering five main areas: behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and professional behaviours (DfE, 2019). It takes a dual approach of “learn that...” content based on research, and a “learn how to...” strand to support teachers to put those things into practice (see pages 4-5).

Your school will determine how and when the CPD is delivered and this should be reflected in your timetable and directed time. It is really important to remember that this is a CPD entitlement for new teachers which you are expected to engage fully with, but it is not a “course” in itself to be passed.

No surprises

The criteria for passing teacher induction, as before, is demonstrating that you meet the *Teachers' Standards*. Your school-based mentor will support you in doing that and you should have regular, scheduled time to discuss your progress. You will have an informal progress review with them at the end of each term, except in terms 3 and 6 when a formal assessment point takes place, led by the induction tutor. These should be on a “no surprises” basis, as your teaching performance and development needs should be under constant review with regular discussion between you and your mentor.

Protected time

Your ECT time of 10 per cent in your

first year and five per cent in your second year is off-timetable time and is in addition to the PPA time that all other teachers in schools get. It is also vital to your workload management and professional development as an ECT.

This time should be timetabled and used for supportive activities such as meeting with your mentor or for ECF CPD.

We believe that it should also be in useable blocks (not less than half-a-day), timetabled well in advance, not dependent on increased teaching loads for other teachers, covered (if necessary) regularly by the same experienced teachers so pupils' learning and good standards can continue, and not cancelled other than in extreme circumstances.

The same principles apply for PPA time but it differs in that this time should be used by teachers for any planning, preparation and assessment work they choose to do and definitely should not be used for cover. Indeed, it is bad practice to use first year teachers for cover at all except in unforeseeable and unavoidable circumstances.

A trained mentor

Your mentor should have been selected because they have relevant experience in your subject or phase of teaching and a desire to carry out the duties and role of a mentor. Mentor training is available at no cost to schools via the provider-led ECF route, and your school should ensure your mentor has completed or started their mentor training, and is aware of the demands of the role, before you start work.

If you are concerned that you are not getting enough support from your mentor, you should speak to your union rep in school or telephone your union's advice line. Your union should also have more detailed advice on your rights and the induction process in general on their website.

Mentor engagement

As you progress through your first

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months of teaching, you will start to understand what areas you need to concentrate more on, and what areas you wish to develop further.

Your mentor should be on hand to support you. It is very important that you have scheduled weekly time with your mentor but, ideally, regular and informal chats should also be possible, as these can help to move your practice on or alleviate your concerns along the way.

If, in an informal progress review, concerns are raised about your teaching performance, ensure that your mentor explains clearly what those are and what you need to do to work on that. These discussions should be documented to help you and your mentor plan support for you.

It is the job of the induction tutor, meanwhile, to ensure you are receiving your mentoring and the ECF course entitlements. If you have any reason to think you are at risk of failing a formal assessment point, it is vital that you contact your union as early as possible for advice and support in dealing with that.

It might be the case that you complete your six induction terms across more than one school. If so, your induction tutor is responsible for handing over your development to the next school. You should also keep and take with you any documentation.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

- DfE: *Early career framework reforms: Overview*, last updated June 2021: <https://bit.ly/3y9ybdS>
- DfE: *Early Career Framework*, January 2019: <https://bit.ly/3vqkRQc>

Wellbeing from day one: A career-long priority

As an early career teacher, self-care should always be at the top of your to-do list if you are to form effective career-long habits, but how can you achieve this?

Creating good, long-lasting, self-care habits may be one of the most important commitments you can make to secure a successful – and sustainable – teaching career.

The past year has been challenging for anyone in teacher training as well as ECTs themselves. No-one will emerge from the pandemic unscathed, but as we rebuild, children will need their teachers to be feeling their best.

The stress and uncertainty of the pandemic has affected many children's readiness to learn. Add stressed or unwell teachers to that picture and it is hard to see how pupils can focus on their academic and pastoral recovery. By prioritising your self-care, you put yourself in the best possible position to help those children who are struggling.

You are in an unprecedented position, as Emma Hollis of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) pointed out in a recent Education Support discussion on Instagram (which you can still watch).

This September, you are going into schools with experienced teachers who feel as unsure as you do, so it is a level playing field in a way it has never been before.

While you have missed time in the classroom, you have had a training that others have not. You have experience and knowledge of teaching online, and supporting children's emotions and wellbeing during a national crisis. This is a unique set of circumstances and you will have learned so much. Remind yourself of this if you ever doubt it.

However, our research shows that NQTs and those who have been working in education for under five years are significantly more likely to experience a mental



health problem compared to their colleagues (2021).

Poor mental health will only get worse over time if not addressed. Can you learn to spot when you need to pause and rest? Are you able to listen to your body and build confidence in your ability to care for yourself? Doing so will help you to get through the hardest, most stressful times. Here are some practical tips to help you build these skills:

Boundary your work hours: You are not a machine and cannot work long hours for sustained periods. Have a priority to-do list but accept once the day is over. Set yourself a cut-off on anything that is a “nice to have”. Ask yourself – is this a priority for me? Will it make a difference? Can it wait?

Be kind to yourself: You will make plenty of mistakes and you will learn from them. That is an essential part of this year and your early career. The bravest thing you can do, as Emma Hollis also pointed out, is to ask for help.

Plan: It will help you feel much more in control and it will show in your lessons. If difficult behaviour

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is a known or likely to be a particular issue, spend some time rehearsing likely scenarios and how you might deal with them.

Make time for your life: Easy to say but put it in your diary. Aim to spend one night a week and time at the weekend doing something that makes you feel like yourself. Cooking a meal, listening to a podcast, a walk in the park, a chat with a friend, watching Netflix – whatever it might be. This isn't selfish. Taking time for yourself helps to prevent burn-out.

Remember: If you are finding things tough, make time to talk about it. Share worries with your mentor, peers, colleagues, friends and family.

And do not forget that in these difficult times, as ever, we are here for you. Call the Education Support

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Education Support: Advice on any issue facing those working in education via the free 24-hour helpline on 08000 562 561 or www.educationsupport.org.uk
- Education Support: *Mental health decline in schools could push more teachers to leave*, March 2021: <https://bit.ly/3v9Y8Yn>
- SecEd Podcast: Our podcast episode on staff wellbeing features advice from Education Support CEO Sinéad McBrearty among other experts. Listen for free via <https://bit.ly/3m4Gwto>
- A recent conversation between NASBTT's Emma Hollis and Sinéad McBrearty, offered tips for early career teachers. To watch, look for “Starting out in teaching: Your mental health matters” on Instagram [@edsupportuk](https://www.instagram.com/edsupportuk)

helpline at any time. You don't have to be in a crisis to call and it is available 24/7.

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All change as the ECF arrives?

The Early Career Framework sets out what all early career teachers should learn about and learn how to do during the first two years of their careers and it comes into full effect from September

In *SecEd's* last supplement for NQTs, I contributed three articles in which I proffered advice on surviving and thriving as a new teacher (see *SecEd*, 2020).

In the first, I reassured new teachers that while teaching is tough, it is tough because it matters. I argued that teachers should never forget, especially on their toughest days, the impact they have on young people's lives.

In the second, I focused on the NQT induction year. I said that an effective induction should combine "a personalised programme of development, support and professional dialogue with monitoring and an assessment of performance" against the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011).

An induction should support new teachers in demonstrating that their performance against the Standards is satisfactory by the end of the year and it should equip them with the tools they need to be an effective teacher thereafter.

In the third article, I explored Ofsted's updated initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework. The framework introduces a new key judgement

called "quality of education and training" and I argued that the criteria Ofsted uses for this judgement are handy for newly and recently qualified teachers and that they can be used as a sense-check of their on-going development, not least in preparation for their assessment against the *Teachers' Standards*.

In this article and the one that follows, I would like to build upon my earlier advice by exploring the implications of the new Early Career Framework (ECF), as well as the introduction of a two-year induction period. A quick note on terminology: in line with the ECF, I will now refer to NQTs as early career teachers or ECTs.

What is the Early Career Framework?

Before I set out what the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) is, let us be clear what it is not.

The ECF is not a set of assessment criteria against which ECTs will be judged. It is not to be used as a checklist and ECTs should not be expected to provide evidence against all the criteria contained within it.

Rather, the ECF is a summary of

the evidence on which the government's new structured two-year package of professional development for ECTs in England is based. It is a one-stop-shop, so to speak, of educational research and good practice advice.

From September 2021, the ECT induction is doubling for all new teachers in England from one to two years (following a pilot in schools in Greater Manchester, Bradford, Doncaster and the North East that began last September).

It is worth noting that, in response to the pandemic, more than 4,600 NQTs outside of early roll-out areas who were due to end their one-year induction this summer have also been promised an additional 12-month package of support based on the ECF in their second year of teaching in 2021/22.

I will explore the two-year induction in more detail in my second article for this supplement (see page 6).

Back to the ECF, the framework forms part of the government's *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (DfE, 2019b) and aims to improve the training and development opportunities available to teachers.

The ECF's intended role in improving teacher recruitment and retention is worth exploring. Government statistics in recent years have shown us that around one in 10 teachers leave the profession each year and an increasing proportion move to other sectors rather than retire, suggesting working conditions rather than age are driving people out of the classroom.

We know, too, that as well as workload concerns, three of the major causes of teachers quitting the classroom are a lack of clarity of expectations, insufficient or ineffective CPD, and a lack of longer-term career development opportunities (see Bromley, 2020).

The vital role of mentors

In terms of a clarity of expectations,

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research suggests the workplace condition most predictive of teacher turnover is a perceived lack of administrative support, a construct that measures how teachers rate a school leader's ability to encourage and acknowledge staff, communicate a clear vision, and generally run a school well (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). When teachers strongly disagree that their leadership is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their leadership team is supportive.

The ECF includes provision for high-quality mentoring for two years which should help tackle this issue. Mentors are also being funded and trained so that they can support their ECTs much more effectively (DfE, 2021a; 2021b).

A key role for mentors, we might infer, is to provide a clarity of expectations and greater leadership support, inducting ECTs not just into the teaching profession but also into the life of the school and its policies and procedures, systems and structures.

Professional development

In terms of CPD, the pressure on ECTs' time can mean professional development is not prioritised, particularly in their second year in the classroom. However, CPD should act as on-going training throughout teachers' careers in order to improve their practice, develop new skills, and maintain subject knowledge.

The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2017) argues that, currently, the teaching

profession in England lacks clear, structured provision for CPD and a number of barriers act to reduce the amount of CPD done by teachers.

As well as struggling to find time for CPD, the current nature of the accountability system – the committee argues – means senior leaders can be reluctant to release staff from the classroom. As well as CPD being available, therefore, teachers must be given time to attend training.

Once again, the ECF should help to tackle these issues by providing ECTs with high-quality evidence-based support and over a much longer period. Perhaps more importantly, such professional development is being funded and the time needed to engage in it is being protected so that it is not left to a headteacher's goodwill but rather is guaranteed for all.

Indeed, from September 2021, ECTs will be entitled to two years of funded high-quality training.

In addition to the 10 per cent timetable reduction that ECTs receive in their first year of induction, ECTs will also receive a five per cent timetable reduction in the second year (on top of PPA time).

What is more, an ECT should have access to training materials based on the ECF evidence-base, and their mentor will also be entitled to funded training and cover in the second year to help them support their ECT's CPD.

Career progression

In terms of career progression, in a report in 2018, Teach First argued that nurturing existing talent in schools could help address the teacher retention issue.

The report claims that 88 per cent of teachers say that if their school were to offer excellent career development opportunities this would have some impact on their likelihood of remaining at their school, with 34 per cent saying it would have a great impact. Importantly, this rises to 41 per cent of those teachers considering leaving the profession within the next year.

Career progression opportunities, including leadership development, provides teachers with an additional incentive to stay in education, rather than seeking progression opportunities elsewhere. Providing teachers with

“Three of the major causes of teachers quitting the classroom are a lack of clarity of expectations, ineffective CPD, and a lack of longer-term career development opportunities”

a positive and supportive culture of learning and development could, therefore, support with morale and retention.

The ECF, by helping to form the habit of structured professional development over two years, should go some way to providing these longer-term development opportunities.

What is in the ECF?

The ECF sets out what all ECTs should learn about and learn how to do during the first two years of their careers. It covers five core areas of practice: pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, behaviour, and professional behaviours (DfE, 2019a).

Supported by the Educational Endowment Foundation, the framework authors reviewed the best available research in each of these areas. Each of the areas were then matched to the *Teachers' Standards*. The framework contains eight Standards:

1. High expectations.
2. How pupils learn.
3. Subject and curriculum.
4. Classroom practice (pedagogy)
5. Adaptive teaching.
6. Assessment.
7. Managing behaviour.
8. Professional behaviours.

Each of the eight sections is split into two areas – knowledge and application. The knowledge or “learn that...” statements outline findings from research. For example, the classroom practice section includes the knowledge statement: “Explicitly teaching pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, supports independence and academic success.”

The application or “learn how

to...” statements explain how the knowledge would be put into practice. For example, for the “learn that” statement above, the “learn how to” statement is: “Narrating thought processes when modelling to build pupils' metacognition.”

Here follows selected examples from some of the “learn that” and “learn how to” statements from three of the ECF's Standards. To read all eight Standards in full, download the ECF (DfE, 2019a).

Standard 1: High expectations

ECTs will learn that:

- Teacher expectations can affect pupil outcomes; setting goals that challenge and stretch pupils is essential.
- Setting clear expectations can help communicate shared values that improve classroom and school culture.

ECTs will learn how to communicate a belief in the academic potential of all pupils by:

- Using intentional and consistent language that promotes challenge and aspiration.
- Creating a positive environment where making mistakes and learning from them and the need for effort/perseverance are part of the daily routine.
- Seeking opportunities to engage parents and carers in the education of their children.

Standard 2: How pupils learn

ECTs will learn that:

- Working memory is where information that is being actively processed is held, but its capacity is limited and can be overloaded.
- Where prior knowledge is weak, pupils are more likely to develop misconceptions, particularly if new ideas are introduced too quickly.

ECTs will learn how to avoid overloading working memory by:

- Taking into account pupils' prior knowledge when planning how much new information to introduce.
- Breaking complex material into smaller steps.
- Reducing distractions that take attention away from what is being taught.

Standard 7: Behaviour

ECTs will learn that:

- A predictable and secure environment benefits all pupils, but is particularly valuable for pupils with SEN.
- Building effective relationships is easier when pupils believe that their feelings will be considered and understood. ECTs will learn how to develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils by:
- Working alongside colleagues.
- Giving manageable, specific and sequential instructions.
- Checking pupils' understanding of instructions before a task begins.
- Using consistent language and non-verbal signals for common classroom directions. **SecEd**



FURTHER INFORMATION

- ▶ Bromley: *Recruitment and Retention: 12 solutions for schools*, *SecEd*, March 2020: <http://bit.ly/2ThnOSQ>
 - ▶ Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond: *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*, Learning Policy Institute, August 2017: <https://bit.ly/3nE6lwc>
 - ▶ DfE: *Statutory guidance: Induction for early career teachers*, March 2021a: <https://bit.ly/3u948kk>
 - ▶ DfE: *Early career framework reforms: Overview*, last updated June 2021b: <https://bit.ly/3y9ybdS>
 - ▶ DfE: *Early Career Framework*, January 2019a: <https://bit.ly/3vqkRQC>
- For ECF resources, materials and information, see: www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk
- ▶ DfE: *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy*, January 2019b: <http://bit.ly/2Tphgiw>
 - ▶ DfE: *Teachers' Standards*, 2011: <http://bit.ly/2GGsQ59>
 - ▶ Education Committee: *Retention and recruitment of teachers*, February 2017: <https://bit.ly/3xBfMG>
 - ▶ *SecEd: Supporting NQTs and ECTs*, November 2020: <https://bit.ly/3e170de>
 - ▶ Teach First: *Leading together: Why supporting school leadership matters*, March 2018: <https://bit.ly/2Qxs2HF>





From one to two years...

The induction for new teachers is to move from one to two years under the Early Career Framework. What are the roles and responsibilities of teachers, induction tutors and mentors, school leaders, and the appropriate body under the new system from September?

Today, teaching is more of an evidence-informed profession than ever before. We now know so much more about what works and what doesn't in the classroom and thus it is crucial that new teachers are inculcated in the evidence-base. Of course, it takes time to translate theory into practice and thus ECTs need at least two years to absorb the research and consider how to convert it into classroom reality.

A two-year induction should also – the government says – go some way towards tackling the teacher retention crisis.

In 2018, the Education Policy Institute reported that just 60 per cent of teachers were working in state-funded schools in England five years after starting training. This five-year retention rate was even lower for high priority subjects such as physics and maths, where it was just 50 per cent (Sibieta, 2018).

We know that many teachers who quit the classroom within the first five years do so because of workload and because they feel

unsupported in their early endeavours (Bromley, 2020). Not only should the ECF provide more support, but it should also ensure – by training mentors and protecting their time – that this support is more effective. The ECF should also provide a springboard to longer term CPD by ensuring ECTs develop good habits for reflecting on their practice.

What will ECTs have to do?

What will ECTs be expected to do during their two-year induction? The short answer is engage in a planned programme of CPD including mentoring, and demonstrate their performance against the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011).

So, how does this programme of professional development work? Well, schools have three options to choose from when providing training to their ECTs (see *SecEd*, 2021a):

- Full induction programme: A funded provider-led programme offering training for ECTs and their mentors

alongside CPD resources and materials.

- Core induction programme: Schools can draw on the content of the core induction programmes to deliver their own ECT and mentor training.
- School-based programme: Schools design and deliver their own ECF-based induction programme.

There are six suppliers who have been accredited by the government to provide training materials: Ambition Institute, Educational Development Trust, Teach First, UCL, Best Practice Network, and Capita (with lead academic partner the University of Birmingham).

By way of example, if schools opt for the UCL programme, their ECTs will be expected to engage with weekly self-directed study and mentor meetings, as well as with less frequent training and online learning community sessions. And they will be expected to put what they are learning into practice outside these events.

Weekly self-directed study activity will be 45 minutes in length.

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There are eight modules of self-directed study in the UCL programme. In each module, there are reading materials and a review task in which ECTs are asked to reflect on the practices that they are already doing well, the practices they are doing some of the time but could do more of/more consistently, and the practices they do not yet use in their teaching.

The aim is that ECTs will both refine and extend what they already do well and build their skills and confidence in using practices which are not yet a regular part of their teaching repertoire.

Each module also contains a practical exercise such as reading a classroom scenario and



commenting on what they would do in response. Each module ends with a "next steps" task in which ECTs are asked to bring their notes from the activity to their next mentor meeting and to be ready to discuss the activity with their mentor.

Ultimately, they are expected to use their learning in each self-study session to make at least one positive change in their lessons over the following week.

What support can ECTs expect in return?

As well as the training programme, ECTs are also entitled to a suitable monitoring and support programme throughout their two-year induction.

This support programme should be structured to meet ECTs' unique professional development needs (such as for part-time teachers). This is expected to include:

- A programme of training that supports the new teacher to understand and apply the knowledge and skills set out in the ECF's evidence ("learn that") statements and practice ("learn how to") statements.
- Regular mentoring sessions from a designated mentor who is expected to hold QTS and has the time and ability to carry out the role effectively.
- Support and guidance from a designated induction tutor who is expected to hold QTS and has the time and ability to carry out the role effectively.
- Observation of the new teacher's teaching with written feedback provided.
- Professional reviews of progress conducted by the induction tutor to set and review development targets against the *Teachers' Standards*.
- Observations of experienced teachers either in the new teacher's own institution or in another institution where effective practice has been identified.

The induction tutor

The induction tutor is crucial to the success of the two-year induction and is expected to review the ECT's progress against the *Teachers' Standards* throughout the two-year induction period.

Two formal assessments will take place, normally at the end of term 3

and term 6. In the other terms, progress reviews will take place.

Progress reviews are expected to be informed by existing evidence of the ECT's teaching and to be conducted with sufficient detail to ensure that there is nothing unexpected for the ECT when it comes to their formal assessment.

Progress reviews are not formal assessments and there is no requirement for new teachers to create evidence specifically to inform a progress review. New teachers are expected, nonetheless, to engage with the process and provide copies of existing evidence as agreed with the induction tutor.

A written record of each progress review is expected to be retained and provided to the ECT after each meeting, with the record clearly stating whether the ECT is on track to successfully complete induction, briefly summarising evidence collected by the induction tutor and stating the agreed development targets.

It is also expected that objectives are reviewed and revised in relation to the *Teachers' Standards* and the needs and strengths of the individual ECT.

Where the induction tutor believes the ECT is not making satisfactory progress, it is expected that they outline the plan they have put in place to assist the new teacher in getting back on track.

The induction mentor

All ECTs going through induction from September 1 must have an induction tutor and an induction mentor. This new role of induction mentor is a distinct role to that of the tutor. Mentors must offer mentoring sessions to provide targeted feedback and offer or source effective support, including subject or phase-specific coaching. The mentor also has a role in taking prompt action if the ECT is having difficulties (*SecEd*, 2021b).

Roles and responsibilities

Now I will list some (not all) of the roles and responsibilities of the ECT, their head, induction tutor, mentor and appropriate body as detailed in the ECT induction guidance (DfE, 2021a).

The ECT is expected to...

- Provide evidence that they have QTS and are eligible to start induction.

“Progress reviews are not formal assessments and there is no requirement for new teachers to create evidence specifically to inform a progress review”

- Meet with their induction tutor to discuss and agree priorities for their induction programme and keep these under review.
- Agree with their induction tutor how best to use their reduced timetable allowance and guarantee engagement with their ECF-based induction programme.
- Provide evidence of their progress against the *Teachers' Standards*.
- Raise any concerns with their induction tutor as soon as practicable.
- Consult their appropriate body named contact at an early stage if there are difficulties in resolving issues with their tutor/within the institution.
- Keep track of and participate effectively in the scheduled classroom observations, progress reviews and formal assessment meetings.
- Agree with their induction tutor the start and end dates of the induction period/part periods and the dates of any absences from work.
- Retain copies of all assessment reports.

The head is expected to...

The headteacher is jointly responsible (with the appropriate body) for the monitoring, support and assessment of the ECT and is expected to:

- Check that the ECT has been awarded QTS.
- Agree, in advance of the ECT starting the induction programme, which body will act as the appropriate body.
- Ensure that the requirements for a suitable post for induction are met.
- Ensure that both the induction

tutor and induction mentor have the ability and sufficient time to carry out their roles effectively.

- Ensure the ECT's progress is reviewed regularly, including through observations of and feedback on their teaching.
- Ensure that assessments are carried out and reports completed and sent to the appropriate body.
- Maintain and retain accurate records of employment that will count towards the induction period.
- Ensure that all monitoring and record-keeping is done in the most streamlined and least burdensome way.
- Make the governing body aware of the arrangements that have been put in place to support ECTs serving induction.
- Make a recommendation to the appropriate body on whether the ECT's performance against the *Teachers' Standards* is satisfactory or requires an extension.
- Participate appropriately in the appropriate body's quality assurance procedures.
- Retain all relevant documentation/evidence/forms on file for six years.

There may also be circumstances where the headteacher is expected to intervene early, alerting the appropriate body when necessary, when an ECT may be at risk of not completing induction satisfactorily. They may also need to ensure third-party observation of an ECT who may be at risk of not performing satisfactorily against the *Teachers' Standards*.

The induction tutor is expected to...

- Provide, or coordinate, guidance for the ECT's CPD (with the appropriate body where necessary).
- Undertake two formal assessment meetings during the total induction period (as already mentioned), coordinating input from other colleagues as appropriate.
- Carry out regular progress reviews throughout the induction period, including in terms where a formal assessment does not occur.
- Inform the ECT following progress review meetings of the

determination of their progress against the *Teachers' Standards*, sharing progress review records with the ECT, head and appropriate body.

- Ensure that the ECT's teaching is observed and feedback provided.
- Inform the ECT during the assessment meetings of the judgements to be recorded in the formal assessment record and invite the ECT to add their comments.
- Ensure ECTs are aware of how, both within and outside the institution, they can raise any concerns about their induction programme or their personal progress.
- Take prompt, appropriate action if an ECT appears to be having difficulties.
- Ensure that all monitoring and record-keeping is done in the most streamlined and least burdensome way, and that requests for evidence from ECTs do not require new documentation, but draw on existing working documents.

The induction mentor is expected to...

- Regularly meet with the ECT for structured mentor sessions to provide effective targeted feedback.
- Work collaboratively with the ECT and other colleagues involved in the ECT's induction within the same school to help ensure the ECT receives a high-quality ECF-based induction programme.
- Provide, or broker, effective support, including phase or subject-specific mentoring and coaching.
- Take prompt, appropriate action if an ECT appears to be having difficulties.

The appropriate body is expected to...

Appropriate bodies, such as a local authority, a Teaching School Hub, National Teacher Accreditation, or the Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel, will have a role in checking that ECTs are receiving a programme of support and training based on the ECF. This will be alongside their current role ensuring that new teachers receive their statutory entitlements and are fairly and consistently assessed.



Schools choosing to deliver their own induction programmes, whether using Department for Education-accredited materials or the ECF itself, will need to provide information to their appropriate body to demonstrate that their programme fulfils statutory requirements.

The appropriate body has the main quality assurance role within the induction process.

Through quality assurance, the appropriate body should assure itself that:

- Headteachers are aware of and are capable of meeting their responsibilities for monitoring support and assessment. This includes checking that an ECT receives an ECF-based induction programme, a designated induction tutor and mentor, and the reduced timetable.
- The monitoring, support, assessment and guidance procedures in place are fair and appropriate.

Completing the induction

The end of an ECT's two-year induction period will, as now, be marked by a decision as to whether their performance against the *Teachers' Standards* is satisfactory. I wrote about the role the Standards play in a successful induction in *SecEd's* last NQT/ECT special supplement (*SecEd*, 2020).

In that piece, I said that the decision about whether an NQT's performance is satisfactory should

take into account their work context and must be made on the basis of what can be reasonably expected of them by the end of their induction.

Judgements should also reflect the expectation that an NQT has effectively consolidated their initial teacher training and demonstrated their ability to meet the relevant Standards consistently over a sustained period.

All of this remains unchanged under the ECF. What's more, the government says that a two-year induction will have no adverse impact upon an ECT's pay or career progression opportunities (DfE, 2021b). In other words, ECTs will still be able to progress on the pay scale as current arrangements allow, both during and after induction.

The statutory guidance for a new teacher's induction (DfE, 2021a) says that all qualified teachers who are employed in a relevant school in England must, by law, have completed an induction period satisfactorily (subject to specified exemptions).

The guidance was updated in light of the ECF. In addition to what we have already explored, one other key change includes in cases where ECTs working part-time can demonstrate that they have met the *Teachers' Standards*, the appropriate body is able to reduce the length of the induction period and bring forward the final assessment point.

This decision has to be made in agreement with the ECT and once

the ECT has completed a period covering, but not equivalent to, two school years. SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- ▶ Bromley: *Recruitment and Retention: 12 solutions for schools*, *SecEd*, March 2020: <http://bit.ly/2ThnOSQ>
- ▶ DfE: *Induction for early career teachers*, March 2021a: <https://bit.ly/3u948kk>
- ▶ DfE: *Early Career Framework reforms: Overview*, last updated June 2021b: <https://bit.ly/3y9ybdS>
- ▶ DfE: *Early Career Framework*, January 2019: <https://bit.ly/3vqkRQC>
For ECF resources, materials and information, see: www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk
- ▶ DfE: *Teachers' Standards*, July 2011: <http://bit.ly/2GGsQ59>
- ▶ *SecEd*: *ECF: Which delivery model is best?* May 2021a: <https://bit.ly/3pgggy9>
- ▶ *SecEd*: *ECF: Choosing your school's induction mentors*, June 2021b: <https://bit.ly/3vFChbX>
- ▶ *SecEd*: *Supporting NQTs and ECTs*, November 2020: <https://bit.ly/3e170de>
- ▶ Sibietta: *The teacher labour market in England*, EPI, August 2018: <https://bit.ly/3cBBb9V>

Your professional priorities...

Teachers trained during the pandemic will have learnt many skills, but will have missed out on development in crucial areas, too. As such, what should your professional priorities be?

In my eyes, those who have trained to be teachers this last year, as well as those finishing their first year at the chalkface, will be some of the most resilient teachers in the profession.

Not only have you had to overcome the challenges facing everyone new to the profession, you have also had to do it during a pandemic.

The result is that we will have a number of highly adaptable and versatile teachers entering the profession, arguably with a broader range of skills and experiences when it comes to technology and pedagogy.

However, given the disruption, it is only natural that trainees and new teachers will not have been able to fully prepare across every area of practice. For all your strengths, there are some areas on which you might want to focus in the coming months.

Behaviour

Dealing with behaviour is challenging for all teachers. One of the challenges teaching during the pandemic was behaviour practice, especially online. The disruptive stopping and starting of face-to-face education and the nature of online environments made it difficult for teachers to embed routines and solidify classroom habits.

So taking the time to re-establish and rethink your expectations and routines for successful learning will put you in a good, positive position from September. It will build your confidence, especially if you have lost time in the classroom over the last year or so. It will help learners to re-adjust as well.

On top of this, you may have had reduced or limited exposure to the more "complex" classes and individuals.

Apply the same procedures and protocols that you would always use and ensure you remain consistent and fair. Again, use your routines and expectations to underpin your classroom ethos and ensure clear boundaries.

Tracking pupil progress

Although there has been ample opportunity to exploit the capabilities of online learning platforms to track pupil progress, what has been missing is that uninterrupted, holistic overview of learning that we get when we are in the physical classroom.

In addition, it has been more difficult to track learning over time during remote learning. As such, it is important for new teachers to look carefully at how summative assessment can aid us in seeing how learners are progressing.

Building and refining your subject knowledge is an on-going process and it never really ends

Pupils' progress is not always linear and learning to interpret data and looking at ways to effectively intervene is something that puts you in good stead for the rest of your career.

Checking for understanding in class is also an important practice that has been disrupted by the pandemic. Many schools have limited the movement of teachers around the room (rightly so) but a side-effect of this is that trainees have not had the opportunity to explore ways of actively checking for understanding during learning.

Without this valuable information, acting upon misconceptions and marking becomes more onerous and, as such, many ECTs have a theoretical understanding of such workload-reducing approaches, but have had little chance to apply them.

In light of this, experimentation with techniques for checking for understanding should be a priority for any new teacher in September. I am a big advocate of live feedback,

in-class marking and other approaches. I discuss many of these techniques in my articles for *SecEd* (see link, right) and also discussed this during the recent *SecEd Podcast* on quality first teaching (2021a).

Talk exercises

Talk in the classroom has been badly affected during the pandemic for a number of obvious reasons. A knock-on effect is that new teachers have had inconsistent or significantly reduced exposure to rich talk exercises.

Face masks have been a huge barrier too when it comes to effective talk in the classroom. Not only do masks make projection difficult (for students and teachers alike), but they also create a physical barrier to facial expressions, providing a shield for learners to mumble behind.

Masks have led to a natural reduction in talk being used in the classroom. This means that exposure to effectively modelled, scaffolded and managed talk tasks has been somewhat sparse for many. In addition, long periods of isolation and phases of online learning have affected students' confidence to engage with talk tasks (*SecEd*, 2021b).

Getting talk right makes a massive difference to the culture of your classroom and filling the experience gap that has been created by Covid will improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching. I wrote recently for *SecEd* on using talk (Riches, 2021).

Subject knowledge

Many ECTs have had their timetables changed to teach specific bubbles. As a result, there have been some limitations on exposure to subject knowledge in context.

And while online CPD has been a revelation in many respects, there are downsides – screen fatigue, fewer natural tangents or discussions, more rigid delivery... Overall, subject knowledge CPD has suffered during the pandemic.

Adam Riches

...is a senior leader for teaching and learning, a Specialist Leader in Education and author of Teach Smarter (Routledge, 2020). Read his previous articles via <http://bit.ly/seced-riches>

Building and refining your subject knowledge is an on-going process and it never really ends. Furthermore, effective questioning and the ability to address misconceptions correlates directly with subject knowledge and so it is important that ECTs and trainees get as much time at the chalkface as they can now that school is returning to normality.

Taking the time to observe others teaching a topic and reflecting on what approaches they use is a great form of CPD, but getting in front of the pupils and giving it a go is the most effective way to test subject knowledge.

Moving forwards

Reflecting on what you have missed over the past 18 months should not be a depressing exercise, but should inform you and ensure you can act now to minimise any negative impact of the pandemic on your training, experience and pedagogy. SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- ▶ *SecEd Podcast*: Adam Riches is among the guests in a recent episode of the *SecEd Podcast* dedicated to Quality First Teaching, April 2021a <https://bit.ly/2R5PIT8>
- ▶ *SecEd*: *MPs call for oracy education to be post-Covid priority*, May 2021b: <https://bit.ly/2SQ0gXo>
- ▶ Riches: *Classroom pedagogy: Why talk is more important than ever*, *SecEd*, April 2021: <https://bit.ly/3uTjKbU>

The ECT journey: Essential teaching travel advice

After such a period of disruption, what hurdles will new teachers face this coming academic year? We collect some useful tips from new teachers and those who mentor them...

As I sit down to write this article, there has been much talk of summer holidays and the government's travel green list. After a year corroded by crisis management and Covid-19 restrictions in schools, many teachers and colleagues will be tempted by the lure of sun, sea and sand. For many others, simply taking a step back from class bubbles and a year of disruption will be equally alluring.

The same will be true of our trainee teacher colleagues, who will have overcome significant challenges themselves during the past 12 months. You are now facing up to your first year at the chalkface and the new handle of "early career teacher".

So what lies ahead? After speaking with new teachers and mentors alike, I would like to offer ECTs and trainee teachers some steps to help ensure success this coming year and

beyond. As you can see, I have been inspired by dreams of travel and holidays...

Handling your luggage

Research shows us that carving out time in your itinerary in order to reflect is important. Smith et al (2018) found that individuals who formed the habit of writing down positive experiences from their day observed a decrease in anxiety and negative emotions.

Alex Fairlamb (@lamb_heart_tea) is a senior leader and also national coordinator for @TMHistoryIcons, a teacher support network. She tells me: "It is important to stop in your journey as a (trainee or) ECT and reflect on your successes, knowledge and skills gained along the year as a whole.

"Once you have celebrated your success from this year, begin to use this to identify your learning plan for the year ahead. Ask yourself where you feel

less confident and discuss this with your mentor to help set some goals for the year ahead."

Remember your passport

Panic-stricken passengers at an airport trying to locate a missing passport never make for easy viewing. Research shows us that new teachers can experience "practice shock" when starting to teach, and that well-tailored collegial support can help smooth their adjustment to teacher practice (Colognesi et al, 2019; Harju & Niemi, 2016; Spencer et al, 2018).

Given the turbulent year many trainees and ECTs have had, it is understandable that some of this anxiety may continue into the next phase of your careers.

A supportive school culture is essential to the success of ECTs and their professional development in classrooms. Mentors will play a key role in the coming year.

Sarah Hambley (@HambleySarah) is an assistant headteacher and is also responsible for teacher development in her school. While celebrating the qualified teacher status (QTS) passport is important, she cautions against ECTs feeling that they somehow need to be fully confident or independent in their practice beyond QTS.

She explained: "Just because you now have your new teacher passport in the form of QTS doesn't mean that you are expected to be amazing or know everything about the science of teaching. Keep talking to your colleagues, reflecting on your practice and identifying where you feel that you might need support."

Talk to the locals

Talking to local people and researching the local culture of

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...is a doctoral researcher with Teesside University and a teacher and middle leader at Bede Academy in Northumberland. Read his previous articles via <http://bit.ly/sec-ed-harris>

your holiday destination is a must for anybody wanting to make the most of their break.

Likewise, transitioning from the climate of trainee to ECT to recently qualified teacher can bring with it uncertainty and a sense of the unknown. James Wilson (@mrjkwilson), who stepped into his first headship last year, continues to think back to his NQT year and the need to develop an in-school support network.

He explained: "Get to know your community beyond the school gate. Find out the challenges and highlights of the local area. But, above all, get to know your in-school support network.

Consider the top two to three goals that you want to focus on in the next year as a new teacher and then share these with colleagues. Find the people who can help you to make sense of these goals and work towards them."

Your mentor can help with this, but you do not have to wait for formal meetings. Kirsten Osman (@kirstensbrain), raising achievement leader at the Northumberland CE Academy, says trainees and ECTs should not be afraid of seeking out support: "Identify colleagues in your school in a range of roles who seem open to supporting you next year. Approach them now and share informally how you want to keep getting better in your practice."

Send postcards

Caitlin Tubby was an NQT last year

and worked alongside me at Bede Academy in Northumberland. Caitlin has been on Ambition Institute's Early Career Teachers programme, written as part of the Early Career Framework (ECF), which has been running in pilot form this year and which rolls out fully from September 2021.

Among the provisions in the ECF reforms, there is significant support for ECTs, including a funded entitlement to a structured two-year package of high-quality professional development (see DfE 2019 & 2021).

Caitlin has been taking aspects of her learning from the ECF programme and using it to run in-school sense-making workshops for colleagues in her department. These learning "postcards" have proved beneficial for everyone concerned.

She explained: "I have learned so much about the science of teaching as a new teacher and am constantly thinking about my craft alongside my mentor and other colleagues. The workshops have given me the opportunity to grow in confidence as a new teacher and lead CPD for colleagues that can help me to ask the 'so what?' of the research and theory in the context of our subject."

The need for CPD to be rooted in evidence and embedded in continuous enquiry is well-documented (Bolam et al, 2006; Cordingley & Temperley, 2006; Jackson, 2002). Involving new teachers in aspects of CPD design, thought and implementation can be useful if structured carefully.

Each half-term, Caitlin has explored a core concept alongside me as a mentor. She has then used this to create a workshop for colleagues in her subject discipline.

In a recent session, Caitlin investigated the "curse of knowledge" and looked at research into how tasks could be reframed to ensure teachers do not overlook pupil misconceptions and barriers. Colleagues were then given time to practise the habit of reframing tasks as part of a scheme of work in collaborative planning time.

Relax and recharge

Perhaps we all need a holiday after 2021, whatever role we are in. However, researchers Nawijn et al

(2010) found that most people are not happier after a holiday. The data trends revealed that there was no happiness gain after a holiday if the holiday-maker had experienced moderate to high travel-related stress.

Unfamiliarity with the destination, managing trip itineraries and a lack of feeling safe all contributed to negative stress – can you see where I am going with this?!

This year has arguably been the most turbulent of journeys for any trainee or ECT. Rachel Smith was an NQT this year and, like other teachers, has managed many competing demands and challenges over the academic year: "I've only ever taught in a pandemic!" laughs Rachel.

Considering the year ahead for ECTs, she advised: "It can be helpful to find an informal coach or mentor within teaching. Somebody you can trust, somebody to perhaps just call and sound out about pressures or frustrations you are having in the profession."

She also suggests using the reduced timetables as an ECT to observe other teachers and embed best practice in your own classroom: "Don't just use your reduced timetable for admin."

Anything to declare?

At the end of the day, it is important to take note of those that we serve – the pupils. A habit I developed early into my career, thanks to the support of others, is calling parents and carers to say well done to those pupils who get it right. So as you embark on your journey this year, remember to make regular time to call a few parents. Identify those pupils that may need a positive postcard home, an affirming phone call, or simply an email to say well done. You may find it helps them on their own journey.



FURTHER INFORMATION

- ▶ Ambition Institute: Early Career Teachers programme: www.ambition.org.uk/ecf/
- ▶ Bolam, Stoll & Greenwood: *The involvement of support staff in professional learning communities* (in *Professional Learning Communities*, Stoll & Seashore, eds, Open University Press/McGraw-Hill, 2006).
- ▶ Colognesi et al: *Supporting NQT professional development and perseverance in secondary education*, *European Journal of Teacher Education* (43,2), November 2019: <https://bit.ly/3eUmjFc>
- ▶ Cordingley & Temperley: *Leading CPD in school networks: Adding value, securing impact*, NCSL & CUREE, 2006: <https://bit.ly/3fD27H5>
- ▶ DfE: *Induction for early career teachers*, March 2021: <https://bit.ly/3u948kk>
- ▶ DfE: Early Career Framework, January 2019: <https://bit.ly/3vqkRQC>
- For ECF resources, materials and information, see: www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk
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- ▶ Jackson: *The creation of knowledge networks: Collaborative enquiry for school and system improvement*, NCSL, 2002.
- ▶ Nawijn et al: *Vacationers happier, but most not happier after a holiday*, *Applied Research Quality Life* (5), February 2010.
- ▶ Smith et al: *The physical and psychological health benefits of positive emotional writing*, *British Journal of Health Psychology* (23), 2018: <https://bit.ly/3u1E0HF>
- ▶ Spencer et al: *The professional development needs of ECTs, and the extent to which they are met: A survey of teachers in England*, *Professional Development in Education* (44,1), 2018.



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It takes two to tango: How to build effective relationships

The induction mentor role puts mentoring at the heart of the Early Career Framework, and when the relationship between the early career teacher and their mentor is effective great things can happen. But it takes two to tango. We offer advice for both mentor and mentee...

Mentoring new teachers is one of the greatest privileges there is in schools. But with great power... (well, you know the rest). As has already been mentioned in this supplement, all ECTs going through induction from September must have an induction mentor, which is a distinct role from that of the induction tutor.

Mentors must offer mentoring sessions to provide targeted feedback and offer or source effective support, including subject or phase-specific coaching. The mentor also has a role in taking prompt action if the ECT is having difficulties (SecEd, 2021).

However, the sole responsibility for a teacher's development cannot be placed on the mentor alone. It has to be a joint effort, where both parties co-create a confident and effective teacher by the end of the process. The ECT must absolutely have co-ownership over this process.

The strategies I outline below are therefore intended as advice, both for the mentor and the teacher alike. When these two people work together towards a common goal, magic happens and what we end up with is not only a competent teacher, but one who is motivated to continue to seek out development opportunities throughout their career.

As with most successful partnerships, the foundation for success is rooted in positive, encouraging, non-judgemental relationships.

Advice for the mentors Set clear expectations

ECTs are entering a new world. It is likely they have never worked in your school before, so they may be unaware of what constitutes professional conduct, what the termly rhythms of the school are like or what level of pressure they will encounter as an ECT, rather than as a trainee.

Having those expectations laid out can be very useful. To do this, mentors should identify with their mentees the times in the school calendar where pressure is likely to be felt most. This might be during student assessment windows or when lesson observations are scheduled.

It could be those times when students are likely to be most distracted due to an upcoming holiday. It may also be when timetables are rearranged and staff are likely to have to begin re-establishing their authority and building new relationships.

Expectations regarding the standard and volume of evidence required for meeting the *Teachers' Standards* is helpful too. New teachers often do not realise what standard of evidence is needed, so take this needless stress away by showing them what sufficient evidence looks like.

Half of the battle as a new teacher is knowing where you

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stand. Being unsure of yourself is mentally draining. Constantly trying to guess whether or not you are doing enough (or too much) takes its toll, but it does not have to. Setting clear expectations removes this problem.

Stay close to your mentee
One way to practically ensure a new teacher will fall below the required standard is to have them teaching in isolation. A huge mistake that some schools make (as evidenced by countless questions and worries expressed on teacher Facebook groups and

on Twitter) is leaving new teachers to just get on with the job.

Giving them autonomy is, of course, fantastic and it should be encouraged. However, a sink-or-swim approach is a risky bet.

Check-in regularly with your mentee, discussing the planning, assessment, behavioural issues they may be facing, giving tips on how to deal with specific students, and allowing the mentee to observe you teach too.

Teach specific routines

New teachers each have their own ways of managing their own classrooms and with huge levels of creativity and success. But many do not and they benefit from being taught explicit routines that work (almost) all of the time.

It would be impossible for training providers to cover this in depth and breadth, so take time to explain and to show new teachers what works especially well.

One example might be where precisely to stand in a particular classroom to ensure all students can be observed working at once. Another example might be how to phrase behavioural instructions.

Parents' evenings can often be a source of stress for new teachers, so giving them a checklist of things to mention, or even a scripted introduction to get them "into the zone" can all be extremely useful.

A simple routine, taught explicitly, takes a lot of uncertainty out of a daunting situation and means there is one less thing to worry about. It also offers a foundation from which the ECT can develop their own ideas.

Advice for the mentees Dwell (a little) on what did not work

It is wonderful to hear a new teacher describing what went well in their lessons, but overhearing them describing what went well every day, without reference to things they did not go well can set alarm bells ringing. Is this new teacher aware of the mistakes they are making? Are they actively seeking solutions to these problems? Or just hoping nobody notices?

The teachers who make the most progress and become an authentic authority on teaching are those who dwell a little on what did not work the way it should have

done. Addressing small problems quickly can help you to avoid them becoming bigger problems later on. You can learn from every lesson, either by reflecting on the things you would change (write these down!) or by getting someone, ideally your mentor, to give you detailed and practical feedback on what you might have done differently.

Bring agenda items to your mentor

As a mentor, I usually have things in mind that I want to discuss during the next meeting. However, it may be the case that the things I believe are a priority aren't actually a priority in the mind of my mentee. There could be a workload issue, confusion over what constitutes evidence for a particular Teachers' Standard, or a difficult relationship with a student (or even a teacher) that requires intervention.

It might also be the case that there is, unbeknown to the mentor, an upcoming deadline for an assessment report or assignment. By bringing these things to the attention of their mentor, ECTs can take the initiative and deal with potential or perceived problems as they arise – before they become full-blown disasters.

Ask for non-teaching advice

The advice you can seek from your mentor is not limited to classroom practice. Mentors can be a valuable asset to ECTs who are looking further ahead at career aspirations, job applications or who want to get more involved in education beyond the classroom.

Mentors are likely to have a number of years of experience and will be a goldmine for advice on

“The teachers who make the most progress and become an authentic authority on teaching are those who dwell a little on what did not work the way it should have done”



what ECTs should get involved in (and perhaps what they shouldn't) in order to maximise their chances of achieving their mid to long-term aspirations, once Induction is complete. Asking for mock job interviews, to discuss extra-curricular work, or to explore ideas for an action-research project would be an excellent use of time during mentor meetings beyond classroom practice issues.

Keep a record of feedback
Keeping a record of your feedback is not just useful for your evidence file, it is a treasure trove of vital advice that if acted on will transform your teaching, and will help you to make quick and significant progress.

This supports your pupils, as they will naturally learn more from a better teacher. But it also makes a huge difference to you as well. As students learn more, behave and attain better, you will grow in confidence and will begin to find "what works" more quickly, meaning you waste less time on trial and error as you will have developed an effective arsenal of strategies. Recording and acting on feedback from mentors makes this process much quicker.

If I was your mentor...

Finally, allow me to take on the role of mentor for a second and finish with two pieces of advice. First, focus more on your explanations and modelling, less on your PowerPoint fonts. One of the biggest leaps I made in my own teaching came after reading an article on how the quality of our

explanations was essential in developing understanding.

The key to this is having a deep subject knowledge and a variety of clear examples from which I could construct my explanations. My students perform better in those topics where I have spent more time crafting and practising the wording I use to describe, explain and evaluate complex concepts. Subject knowledge is vital, so spend time on it.

Second, do not reinvent the wheel. New teachers often create brand new resources that are incredibly similar to what you will find in their colleagues' drives. This is perfectly fine of course, but it is not an expectation. There are already resources out there that work perfectly well without having to be tweaked or reinvented.

I would go one step further and argue that it is worth paying for high-quality resources rather than sorting through hundreds of free versions that turn out to be of low-quality. A resource that costs a few pounds but saves you an entire evening is money well spent. Do not fall for the myth that you have to go through the process of making everything you use in order to become a great teacher – you can't be great if you are too tired to function.

SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION
► SecEd: *Choosing your school's induction mentors*, June 2021: <https://bit.ly/3vFChbX>



How to be an expert colleague

Let's take a moment to focus on the mentors, those dedicated colleagues who support the development of our early career teachers – but what makes for an effective mentor?

Picture the scene: it is a Friday afternoon towards the end of the first summer half-term. You have had a full timetable and you can barely see your desk for the piles of marking.

The senior leadership team is sending endless emails about centre-assessed grades and you have a challenging year 10 student on an after-school detention.

Your mentee then knocks on your door upset; she's had a bad lesson and wants someone to commiserate with her and tell her it is alright. Nobody said being a mentor is an easy job.

Mentors are inevitably those people who want to develop others and are full of knowledge and wisdom. Yet more often than not, they are time-poor and sometimes lack the capacity to dedicate fully to their important role.

So in the sometimes limited time that mentors have, what are the key things they can do to be a brilliant expert colleague? Let's start off by exploring what the role of a mentor actually is...

What is a mentor?

A fantastic mentor is not just a role model, they are also an advisor and a guide. As an expert colleague, they can point a novice teacher in the right direction when they are struggling with which strategy to trial, or recommend a great piece of research they can read to inform their practice.

But true mentors do much more, from lending a compassionate ear to facilitating bespoke opportunities for their ECT to develop. But they do not always get it right. Unfortunately, while conducting some qualitative research for my book, *Mentoring in*

Schools, I discovered that around 35 per cent of the NQTs I questioned had not enjoyed positive relationships with their mentors and this had contributed to them feeling unsupported, leading them to thoughts of quitting the profession.

On deeper probing, it seemed that in many of these scenarios, mentors had not possessed the experience or expertise to guide their novice teacher sufficiently. This may be because there is an implicit assumption that excellent teachers who have been in the classroom a number of years intuitively know how to mentor.

But mentoring is not a skill that comes naturally to everyone and mentors need training and developing in their role too – which is why the mentor training package, which comes as part of the Early Career Framework roll-out is so

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...is an experienced teacher and mentor. Her new book *Mentoring in Schools: How to become an expert colleague* (Crown House Publishing, 2021) is available now. Visit <https://bit.ly/34xvm8R>

valuable (DfE, 2019). It is also welcome that the ECF requires schools to ensure that the mentor has the "ability and sufficient time to carry out their role effectively" (DfE, 2021b).

As a former middle and senior leader, I have 15 years of mentoring teachers at all career stages under my belt but that certainly does not mean I have all the answers. There are however, some key pieces of advice I would like to offer to prospective expert colleagues.

Know your role

All teachers know that building successful relationships with our students is fundamental; this is also key when building a professional bond with your mentee.

First, it is vital that you determine what you want your relationship to be and to become familiar with the roles and responsibilities it will encompass. Becoming an expert colleague is a huge undertaking and when you sign up to mentor, it is akin to signing a contract. You will need to make time to meet with them on a regular basis and ringfence the mental space to listen to their struggles, mustering the energy to be their personal cheerleader when required – even when you don't feel like it!

Demonstrating that you are available and will make time for your mentee will signal to them that you value their relationship. This may be in the form of scheduled weekly or bi-weekly meetings, or could be on an as-needed basis, whichever suits both your schedules.

Either way, it is important to regularly check-in with them, even if it is just to ask how their day has

been. Over time, the relationship will grow but it needs time to evolve naturally. Treating mentees as colleagues and making them feel part of the department will provide them with a much-needed sense of validation, which will make a huge difference in their self-perception.

Know your mentee

One of the biggest mistakes a mentor can make is to try to mould their ECT into mini-versions of themselves. Obviously, being an expert colleague involves an element of direct instruction as the role of mentor presumes that the mentee is a more novice teacher and as such will need to have aspects of pedagogy modelled by the mentor.

The ECF states in its "learn how to" sections of each Standard the minimum core knowledge and expertise new teachers should be taught during their two-year induction period (DfE, 2019).

Although at first glance this may seem very prescriptive, each statement is based on the robust evidence and the strategies and cognitive science mentioned have been proven to have a huge impact on students.

Therefore, it is important that new teachers are provided with these solid foundations of excellent teaching; they can then use these foundations to create their own teacher style and identity, built around the best practice.

Really get to know what type of practitioner your mentee aspires to be. What are their professional goals and aspirations?

If you know this, you can tailor the mentoring accordingly and facilitate the right opportunities, introducing them to professional networks which may be helpful and involving them in projects which suit their interests.

One of the most critical skills of a mentor is knowing how to take hold and when to let go. Give novice teachers the opportunity to discuss their ideas, take risks and bring their own ideas to life.

Great mentors will also challenge their mentee to come out of their comfort zone and support them to do things that they never thought they could.

However, this does involve a degree of professional trust and resisting the urge to spoon-feed them, instead allowing them the

“It takes a school to grow a great teacher and there needs to be a culture of collaboration and openness so that they can learn from many different teachers”

opportunity to figure it out for themselves. Not only will this help them become more independent but it will make them feel really empowered and confident.

Walk the walk

A mentor's shoes can sometimes be quite heavy to walk in, as your mentee will look up to you as the font of all knowledge.

If they are finding particular aspects of teaching difficult, you will be expected to offer for them to observe you demonstrate these skills in your lessons, or to be able to recount something you may have done when facing a similar challenge.

Even things like using a visualiser or having a restorative conversation with a pupil who has misbehaved may seem like a hugely daunting prospect to a new teacher, so rehearsing together and completing some deliberate practice will help them to feel much more confident.

Crucially though, I have always said that it takes a school to grow a great teacher and there needs to be a culture of collaboration and openness across the school so that new teachers can learn from many different teachers, who all have particular skills and expertise.

This will help if mentors do not know the answer or are asked about a particular aspect of teaching they need to develop themselves, as they can then point ECTs in the direction of another colleague who may be able to assist.

Develop together

Mentoring is a two-way street and although becoming an expert colleague can be challenging at times, there are many benefits. There are a lot of reciprocal rewards

for mentees too and you will learn new things about yourself and your teaching through the reflections you discuss with your mentee.

This might include your personal attributes such as developing your patience or becoming more skilful when giving feedback, but you might also see the novice teacher delivering lessons in a way that you had not previously tried or putting a new slant on a lesson that you would not have thought of.

ECTs have recently undergone training in a university, SCITT or similar route which will have involved reading the latest academic research and thinking in education. Many experienced teachers may not get the time to read as much as they would like, so they can take this opportunity to learn alongside their mentee and discuss the latest books, blogs and articles.

Conclusion

In my rather biased opinion, mentoring an ECT is one of the best jobs in the school. There is no greater reward than watching a colleague developing before your eyes and knowing that they will go on to inspire generations of students.

So although becoming an expert colleague takes dedication, time and patience, it is so worth it. The rewards it brings will give even the most experienced practitioner a renewed sense of energy and purpose, reminding them of the vital role they have to play in retaining the next generation of teachers into this amazing profession.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

- DfE: Early Career Framework, January 2019: <https://bit.ly/3vqkRQc> For ECF resources, materials and information, see: www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk
- DfE: Early career framework reforms: Overview, last updated June 2021a: <https://bit.ly/3y9ybdS>
- DfE: Statutory guidance: Induction for early career teachers, March 2021b: <https://bit.ly/3u948kk>



Ambitions and goals: Where will your career take you?

What are trainees' perceptions of their 'future teacher identity'? A fascinating research project has set out to decipher new teachers' goals and ambitions for their careers – and what this means for how we can support them

How do trainee teachers perceive their future selves as teachers? What type of teachers do they want to be and not to be? And, if we know that, how can we support them in their careers?

I have undertaken research to capture views about novice teachers' identity and consider if their perception of their future teacher identity provides any insight into the current retention issue in teaching, as outlined in the Department for Education's *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (2019).

As a SCITT provider, with approximately 130 schools in our primary and secondary school partnership across Suffolk and

Norfolk, we are aware of the huge range of experiences that our trainees encounter during their training programme.

Training to be a teacher is very context-driven and the opportunities that are provided to novice teachers to be able to "learn to think like a teacher, learn to know like a teacher, learn to behave like a teacher, and learn to be like a teacher" are crucial parts of the development of an early career and trainee teacher's professional identity (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

The stimulus for this research derives from my interest in whether the various contexts that trainees find themselves in affects their expectations of their "future selves" as a teacher and if their

perceptions could offer any insight into the retention of ECTs.

The study we undertook was relatively small-scale in itself, involving 103 ITT primary and secondary trainees as they started their school-centred initial teacher training programme in September.

The questions I asked all link with Markus and Nurius' possible selves theory (1986), which essentially is centred around the representation of self in the past and includes representations of the self into the future.

Possible future selves is focused on specific individual hopes and fears but is also highly socialised. Future possible selves can only be imagined by an individual due to the previous social interactions

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and comparisons that an individual has had within their social context.

All questions were created based on reading I have been doing about professional identity for my PhD and I wanted to capture the trainees' views about teaching at the very early stage of their training year. I also intend, at the end of the training year, to put

similar questions to the trainees and find out what their future selves as an ECT might look like.

I asked three questions about their future identity before they had started their placement in schools.

I looked at all respondents' data and grouped the answers from each question into broad themes that emerged from our analysis, and generated percentages from the number of trainees whose answer fitted into the broad categories.

How and why did you decide to become a teacher?

The first question was about what had led them to become a teacher and why they decided to become a teacher. Predictably, many of the altruistic reasons to become a teacher were clearly evident from the responses. These range from desiring a more valuable career to wishing to help make life changes for young people.

Unsurprisingly, there is a split between secondary trainees who wish to teach to share the passion for their subject and primary trainees who want to teach and love working with children.

However, 39 per cent stated that it was their previous experience in some kind of role in schools which had helped them to decide to become a teacher.

Therefore, based on this small-scale study, it is perhaps

noteworthy for schools to be thinking about being proactive about providing roles for unqualified teachers in schools as this might be a successful recruitment strategy.

What kind of teacher do you want to become?

The second question was about what kind of teacher they wanted to become. Various answers emerged. For example, making a difference, addressing disadvantage, creating a positive learning environment and, predictably from the secondary trainees, having a passion for their subject. However, 50 per cent answered this question with what I ended up defining as "positive teacher attributes".

The kind of teacher trainees want to be is "kind, funny, fair, organised, sensitive, approachable, nurturing, enthusiastic, compassionate, supportive, and engaging".

It appears they are less concerned about being committed to the role or being a positive role model or putting learning into a real-world context. They are focused on developing the attributes which some of the trainees described as being "a teacher that students remember".

What kind of teacher don't you want to become?

The third question was what kind

of teacher they did not want to become. Some answers that might be seen as predictable became clear, such as the trainees did not want to be uncaring, only teach to the exam, and unable to build relationships with students.

Once again a clear response emerged from the data and it was what I ended up defining as "negative teacher attributes". Sixty per cent of the research group stated that they did not want to be the kind of teacher who was "boring, negative, disorganised, lazy, strict, jaded, stuck in their ways, long-winded, confusing or old-fashioned".

When thinking about their future possible selves, trainee teachers were mainly concerned with being described as "boring". I did not ask them to define who they thought would define them as boring but I think it is fair to assume that it would be the students that they would teach in their future teaching careers.

Personal attributes

This research has highlighted that trainees, when thinking about their future possible selves, are more focused on developing personal attributes rather than pedagogical and assessment skills and knowledge.

Should we be reflecting about how more of a balance can be reached between the content of the ITT Core Content Framework

and Early Career Framework and what novice teachers perceive to be important in their career?

Perhaps we should start to encourage mentors and other experienced teachers to explicitly discuss with trainees and ECTs the view they have of their future possible teaching selves?

If mentors can have these types of conversations then they might be able to offer solutions and strategies for when a conflict arises for novice teachers between their future possible selves and the reality of teaching.

For example, mentors could provide trainees and ECTs with potential solutions to address their concerns about being seen as "boring" or "old-fashioned", even though the demands and the content of the national curriculum might make these novice teachers feel that they have to teach what they perceive to be "boring" content.

Conclusion

Our intention is that the results from this small-scale research sample will encourage us, as a training provider, to give more personalised on-going support to trainees during their training and newly qualified induction years.

Importantly, we hope that by encouraging novice teachers to acknowledge that aspects of their possible future selves as teachers might not be attained immediately in the early years of their career, and by providing them with steps to address any conflict, that we can encourage them not to leave in the first five years of their career.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

- DfE: *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy*, January 2019: <http://bit.ly/2Tphgiw>
- Feiman-Nemser: *Teacher learning: How do teachers learn to teach?* (In *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Enduring questions in changing contexts*, Cochran-Smith et al (eds), Routledge, 2008).
- Markus & Nurius: *Possible selves*, *American Psychologist* (41,9), 1986.