WELCOME TO this NQT special edition, which once again is proudly supported by our friends at NASUWT. NQTs everywhere are fast-approaching the end of their first term at the challenge of teaching. This page special edition is intended to offer support, empathy, guidance and advice for what will probably turn out to have been one of the toughest terms of your career.

We have a range of articles from experienced education professionals offering vital advice to help you reflect on your first term in teaching and to look forward to what is to come. Your presence, your contribution and the justifiable pride in what you have contributed to the profession.

Equally, you have probably also experienced the intense demands and challenges of your role.

Teaching is one of the best and most rewarding and worthwhile of the professions, requiring immense dedication, skill and commitment.

Being taught by a qualified teacher is a fundamental entitlement of all children and young people. Parents have the right to expect that their children are taught by qualified teachers and the justifiable pride you will feel in having been instrumental in that progression.

It is more crucial today than ever. Early last year, Ofsted chief Sir Michael Wilshaw called it a ‘national scandal’ that two-thirds of children are taught by non-qualified teachers within five years. Early this year, another analysis of government figures estimated that 40 per cent of children are taught by a qualified teacher within a year of qualifying.

It is clear to me that the unreasonable heavy workloads and poor workplace balance faced by many teachers is one of the issues that lies at the heart of this problem.

We know this to be true not least because of the government’s own – much heralded – Workload Challenge earlier this year. Around 44,000 teachers responded, setting out the clear reasons why workload has been spiralling out of control – identifying the issues that are causing them to burn out.

• Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data: cited by 56 per cent.
• Excessive/depth of marking, including the detail and frequency required: 53 per cent.
• Lesson/weekly planning, including the detail and frequency required: 38 per cent.
• Basic administrative and support tasks: 37 per cent.
• Staff meetings: 36 per cent.
• Reporting on pupil progress: 24 per cent.

In whatever type of school an NQT begins their career, they are entitled to a consistent, high-quality experience which instils confidence and nurtures the passion and enthusiasm with which they entered the profession. This issue will focus on the various aspects of your development and support our NQTs (and all our teachers for that matter). You have the right to expect that you receive not only their induction entitlements, but also are denied access to high-quality introduction into the profession.

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The ABC of learning – practical classroom advice for NQTs

Being a successful NQT is as simple – if not as easy – as ABC. Matt Bromley offers some practical advice on Assessment, Behaviour and Curriculum...

A is for Assessment for learning

There is no silver bullet, no secret formula to teaching great lessons. What works is what’s best and the best thing to do, therefore, is to get to know your students – including by regularly assessing them – and plan for progress by providing opportunities for all your students to fill gaps in their knowledge and skills.

A lesson does not exist in isolation, it is all about context. It is better to think of a lesson as one learning episode in a long series. As such, it does not necessarily need a neat beginning and end, nor does it need to be in four parts and prescribable to a particular style of delivery.

The best teachers are sensitive to the needs of their students and adjust their lessons to the here and now. Students work best for the teachers who respect them, know their subjects, and are approachable and enthusiastic. The most effective teachers are relentless in pursuit of excellence and are able to explain complex concepts in a way that makes sense.

If the work you set is too easy, students will switch off; if the work is too hard, students will switch off. The work you set, therefore, be pitched in the “zone of proximal development” – hard but achievable with time, effort and support.

Classroom discussion makes students smarter because it makes them think. Discussion usually takes the form of teacher-led question and answer sessions and the most common model is IRE – initiation, response, evaluation. But a more effective model is ABC – agree/disagree with, build upon, and challenge.

With ABC, students pass questions around the classroom – the Japanese call this “tachiwa” which means “to polish” because students polish each other’s answers, refining them, making them better by challenging each other’s thinking.

Increasing the amount of time you wait for an answer to a question before either answering it yourself or asking someone else, also makes students’ answers longer, more confident, and increases students’ ability to respond.

Always reward the student and the teacher’s actions to help the student achieve their target. Effective feedback addresses faulty interpretations; comments on rather than grades work; provides cues or answers longer, more confident, and increases students’ means “to polish” because students polish each other’s answers, refining them, making them better by challenging each other’s thinking.

Feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback works best when it is explicit about the feedback.

B is for Behaviour for learning

Even in the best learning environments some students will misbehave and that’s not your fault – they will do so for a variety of reasons, some simple, some complex, but never because you made them misbehave. There are things you can do to prevent students from misbehaving or at least curtail and correct their misbehaviour once it has arisen but, nevertheless, their misbehaviour is never your fault.

Behaviour is only effectively managed when the whole school works together. There must be clear policies and procedures in place which are understood by everyone and these must be followed consistently. It’s an open secret that students like teachers who follow the rules. They like boundaries. They like to feel safe. They like to learn. So you should always follow the school’s policies.

When a student misbehaves, it is human nature to become defensive and to want to get tough, but getting angry and taking it personally is counterproductive.

C is for Curriculum for learning

Curriculum instruction is most effective when students can see various examples of how experts organise and solve problems, whereas a curriculum that focus on breadth of knowledge can prevent true understanding of the concept because there is not enough time to learn in depth.

The ability to monitor one’s approach to problems and to make progress is an important skill. One way to do this is via ‘self-regulated learning’. The ability to self-regulate your learning is an important skill. One way to do this is via ‘self-regulated learning’.

Teaching students how to convey their learning from one concept to another is the difference between educating someone and simply training them to perform. This ability to relate what has been learned to new contexts is called transfer. Attempts to cover too many topics too quickly may hinder learning and subsequent transfer.

Students learn at least as much – and retain what they have learned – much longer if they distribute or space their study time rather than when they concentrate ( cram it). This spacing effect is especially useful when learning new concepts. It is a new concept immediately after you have learned it does not deepen the memory very much. Studying it an hour later, or a day later, does.

Students need to learn new information, not in isolation, but in the context of previous knowledge. If something has been learned for the first time in one context, it is important to teach it again in a different context. Knowledge that is taught in only a single context is not as likely to support flexible transfer at a later date. The same concept can be taught in multiple contexts. See my previous two-part article Transferring learning (SecEd, September 2015) for more.”

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The ABC of learning – practical classroom advice for NQTs

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Five essential habits for NQTs

School leader Allen Hall shares five habits that he believes will make for a successful NQT year

**Receiving positive feedback is great – but it’s not the type of feedback that’s going to make you a better teacher. To improve, you need constructive feedback that drills down to the core of your teaching. Sometimes it is not nice to hear, but it’s necessary.**

To improve, you need constructive feedback that drills down to the core of your teaching. Sometimes it is not nice to hear, but it is necessary. In theatre, directors will give instant feedback in rehearsals to allow the actor to better their performance. In sports, athletes receive regular feedback on their performance and they use practice to make adjustments, allowing them to constantly improve; it is the ultimate growth-mindset. We can learn from these professions. I recommend that you embrace feedback; actively seek it, ask a colleague to watch you teach and give you one (just one) target to improve on. Be a sponge and absorb everything, even the bad advice, because sometimes the most powerful learning is what not to do.

And breathe...

In your first term of teaching, work has a tendency to consume you completely, and you have developed a better relationship with some than others. Terms two and three should be slightly easier and less hectic, but will nevertheless be their own challenges. Now is the time to reflect on what you want to achieve in the coming months. Are there any gaps in your knowledge or teaching? By now you have a good idea of your own areas for development. Be class-specific. For example, your classroom management may be strong in maths, but weak in English. By now you may need to address this.

Maryse Dare, a former NQT secondary mentor, who is now a mathematics coach, told SeEd: “By now you will have an idea of your own areas for development. Be class-specific. For example, your classroom management may be strong in maths, but weak in English. By now you may need to address this.”

Mr. Best, an NQT mentor at Valley Park School, in Maidstone, Kent, agrees. She said that observing more experienced colleagues was an excellent way of improving your own practice.

It’s a great opportunity for talking through any problems or challenges and share experiences with other teachers in a similar situation. Sometimes this is done on an inter-school basis with neighbouring secondaries or within Teaching School Alliances.

*Definitely raise any issues or worries that you have with your mentor or head of department,* Mr Best continued. “If you’re not getting the CPD you need then you should say so. Every teacher will have different needs and areas that they need help with. The NQT year should be about tackling these issues and making sure you get the training you need.”

Virtually, NQTs must not get too down about lessons that have gone badly. Often it is only one part of the lesson that hasn’t gone to plan. “You might have one bad class in a whole week of great work, so don’t think about that one for too long. Learn from any mistakes, but celebrate the good bits too,” said Mr Best.

She added that teaching could be quite isolating so it was important to leave your classroom at break-times and meet with colleagues in the staffroom.

“It’s a great opportunity for talking through any problems or frustrations and getting some advice from...
We ask three middle leaders and a former headteacher to share their advice across four vital areas for NQTs

Managing workload and wellbeing

Brian Heavieside
Former headteacher and Teaching Leaders coach

To the daunted eyes of many experienced teachers, lots are NQTs. “workload and wellbeing can and should be managed to maintain teacher effectiveness and provide the best support for pupils.” In my experience, the secret to achieving both of these goals is in one overwhelming skill that has to be mastered right at the start of the role. To ensure an effective balance in life, teachers need to be expert planners. The key tips to making this happen revolve around the art of real and effective time-management.

Tip 1: If possible, get yourself onto a good time-management programme, or if this isn’t feasible.

Tip 2: Buy a year “page a day” planner and produce your own A4 week plan, broken into the hours of the day. First, put in your working day commitments for the year, and then personal commitments for the year, into both the planner and your week plan. Use separate colour for different types of work, and plan in when you will be marking, and so on, during evening slots and weekends. However...

Tip 3: Ensure that you put into your weekly plan the time to look after yourself, family and friends out of school. Set aside at least one evening a week for doing something you enjoy, whether it be watching television programmes, prepare and eat meals, go to the gym etc. These are vital aspects of effective time-management – you are ensuring that your personal life and wellbeing are given equal priority in your weekly plans.

Tip 4: Now look back at your workload. Check that you have realistically balanced the goals of lesson planning and teaching. It can be useful to do this regularly, regardless of age and experience. Many demands on a teacher’s time are many and varied and will manifest to go back for subsequent lessons in the day “It may seem like time lost but the reality is that if it can be, so that it becomes balanced.

Tip 5: Having planned your working week and personal plans, stick to them! It will keep any stress at bay and will ensure you are a person in your own right, not just a teacher. Plan your time at work and at home. Hold yourself to account and encourage others to also hold you to account.

Developing effective behaviour and classroom management strategies

Dawn Allewhite
Enrolment coordinator at Beaumont Hill Academy in Dartington and a Teaching Leaders fellow

Classroom management is a method by which a teacher creates a positive and productive learning environment for his or her pupils by preventing and effectively dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Managing pupil behaviour remains one of the most daunting aspects of teaching for all levels, particularly with some of our more challenging pupils. As an NQT I always wondered what the magic formula to good behaviour was – the truth is, there isn’t one! However, any teacher has the ability to create the teaching and learning environment they want if they use the right strategies. Some strategies to consider:

Routines: You may wish to send out an assertive message by putting a new class in a seating plan. Structure and routines are the beginning of a class knowing your rules and boundaries.

Clear expectations: It is possible to overload pupils with long lists of expectations, many of which they should know already, without having to be told. Explain your standards and make sure they are met consistently.

Capture the golden moments: Never miss an opportunity to positively praise your pupils.

A good beginning: The beginning of a lesson is a pivotal moment. You may be bombarded with distracting questions but do not get dragged into these conversations.

Smooth transitions: Within a lesson, staggered transitions can be a source of a pupil’s poor behaviour. Only get the class quiet when you are absolutely certain you are ready to explain your next activity.

Positive language: Instead of asking “why are you late?”, you could say “it’s not like you to be late, you’re normally on time, what happened today?” Or instead of “will you stop talking?”, say “I spoke to your mum last week and mentioned how pleased I was with your improved attitude in class, now don’t let me down by chatting today”.

Relationships: It usually takes a long time to build up credibility with some pupils, but fair will help build mutual trust and respect. Some pupils are so startled of attention they don’t care what kind of behaviour they display, often it is easier to get attention from negative behaviour. Research has shown that children can receive 10 negative comments a day for every one positive. So in school it’s important to give positive attention at every opportunity. There will not always be the opportunity to stop and talk with pupils who misbehave and challenge us. If an individual or class do decide to test you, this is your opportunity to re-establish your ground rules and expectations and motivate your pupils.

Getting the most out of CPD

Richard Tiley
Associate curriculum leader (maths) at Droylsden Academy in Manchester and Teaching Leaders Fellow

A lot of thought goes into the CPD that we provide for our NQTs and we have family and friends out of school. Set aside at least one evening a week for doing something you enjoy, whether it be watching television programmes, prepare and eat meals, go to the gym etc. These are vital aspects of effective time-management – you are ensuring that your personal life and wellbeing are given equal priority in your weekly plans.

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friends and colleagues who have been there and done it all before,” Ms Best said. “And other staff may be going through a similar experience. If you don’t have a support network, you can feel 

• Dorothy Lepkowski is a freelance education writer

• Prioritise CPD and attend everything; even voluntary sessions that you believe to be personal strengths – your CPD is your training, not just your job.

• Manage your time well. Use some of your free periods to do your lesson planning and marking, and so on. Use your free periods wisely to get the most out of them.

• Ask for feedback, all the time. Everyone will help you.

• Be proactive. Know your strengths and don’t feel embarrassed about asking for help to improve weaknesses.

• At the end of any CPD session set some SMART targets. When will you implement your new learning? When will you ask someone to observe it? Make sure that you time yourself. Use some of your free periods to get into other classrooms to observe others and see the CPD in action.

• Present CPD to everyone: even voluntary sessions that you believe to be personal strengths – your CPD is your training, not just your job.

• Have a long-term goal. What do you want to do in the future and how will you get there?

Life-changing technology

Lara Petrie
Head of transition and lead teacher of digital pedagogy at St Leonard’s Academy in East Sussex and Teaching Leaders Fellow

My “top tip” for an NQT would be to make the most of technology to support and enhance teaching and learning. Not only can the use of technology motivate students (which can help with behaviour and progress), but it can also support teachers and teaching, and be the organisational tool that saves you a lot of time, which I know every NQT will welcome.

Using technology such as iPads, tablets or SmartPhones can be an excellent way of receiving instant feedback from pupils, e.g. using Socrative or Kahoot. You instantly know who doesn’t understand and can adapt the lesson accordingly, which demonstrates an excellent use of Assessment for Learning.

My favourite life-changing use of technology was stumbling across the Idoceo app. It is my teacher planner. As a new teacher, I didn’t have a new lesson plan each time, I couldn’t tell you how many hours it has saved me which has allowed me to focus on your lessons and teaching. 

Further information

Teaching Leaders is an education charity whose mission is to address educational disadvantage by developing middle leaders working in schools in the most challenging contexts. Visit www.teachingleaders.org.uk

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Alex Collinson looks at the FAQs that school leaders in England have about how they should be supporting their NQTs and considers relevant government guidance for NQT induction.

Every week, SecEd’s headteacher diarist writes his reflections and experiences as a new school leader. This week, focusing on CPD and support, he offers his advice to new teachers.

Supporting New Teachers

A headteacher’s advice for NQTs

Schools have a real responsibility in addressing this issue – it is important to provide them with the support they need to flourish in their first year and beyond. NQTs thrive on personalised support so it is important to provide them with a mentor. The opportunity to speak with someone on a one-to-one basis each week or fortnight is incredibly valuable. Teachers arrive for day one of their NQT year at varying levels of development, so a personalised approach to induction is highly recommended. Some will need a great deal of support and mentoring, others who are further advanced might benefit more from coaching, either way a personalised support model can only work if you know your NQT’s really well.

The bread and butter of all teachers is obviously teaching in the classroom, but how often do we become distracted from this and how much time do we dedicate to honing our craft? In those first few crucial years of teaching it is essential to continue to work closely with your NQTs and give them a wide variety of experiences.

The opportunity to watch the best teachers in your school is always welcomed, but merely observing the lesson and stealing ideas is simply not enough. There needs to be a focus for the observation so that it is meaningful and this should be followed up with a professional discussion so the NQT benefits from exploring the rationale behind the lesson and how it has an impact on student learning.

If it is possible to establish an on-going peer-to-peer observation relationship with more experienced teachers and NQTs then this can be beneficial to both parties as the professional dialogue about student learning can develop a reflective approach to teaching which is very powerful.

The support provided for NQTs should not just come from within the school either. Many local authorities or Teaching School Alliances provide induction packages which can be bought into and if the quality of support is good then it is certainly value for money for several reasons.

The opportunity to network with other NQTs in different schools is valuable and accessing external support mechanisms can keep NQTs refreshed and motivated.

Finally, I offer NQTs the opportunity to take on a project or area of responsibility in terms two and three of an academic year. It is of course, not compulsory and some NQTs do decline the opportunity in order to fully focus on their teaching, but in most cases they are happy to take on a small project.

I have found that this approach helps NQTs to feel valued and gives them the opportunity to prove themselves, which is a good indicator for me when succession-planning in the future.

Regardless of whether you only have one NQT in your school this year – or 10 as I once had – it is critical to provide them with the support they need to make a successful transition into teaching.

Not only is it important for your school and your students, but because of the well-documented retention crisis the whole profession is relying on us.

SecEd’s headteacher diarist is in his first year of headship at a comprehensive school in the Midlands.

Some FAQs about NQTs


Teachers’ Standards: Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies (Department for Education, July 2011): http://bit.ly/1MAMW7j


PDF downloadable: Suggested CPD activities to help achieve targets within the Teachers’ Standards: http://bit.ly/NQTCPD

Strong foundations which have supported me in my progression through my career.

However I know that not everyone is lucky enough to experience such a smooth NQT year and since becoming a headteacher I have thought long and hard about how we can support each other throughout that crucial first year and beyond.

We often talk in statistics in terms of the number of teachers leaving the profession so soon after qualifying and it is worrying that we appear to have a real recruitment and retention issue in teaching, especially in shortage subjects such as maths, languages and science.

By this point in the year, NQTs are likely to have settled into their school and will be getting to grips with the challenges and rewards of their role. Anyone who has been into a school in their first year will know that it can be a stressful time, but it also brings challenges for headteachers and others involved in managing induction programmes.

As a researcher at The Key, I get insight into the questions and concerns uppermost in school leaders’ minds when it comes to staffing matters, not least managing and supporting NQTs.

It is an important part of the remit, especially amid worrying statistics about the number of new teachers who currently enter the profession within their first year.

In many cases, the responses are of as much interest to NQTs. So with this in mind, here are the answers to just some of the questions that school leaders have asked us about NQT induction.

Should NQTs be performance-managed?

Although teachers undergoing induction are not subject to the regulations covering the performance management of most teachers in maintained schools in England, each NQT must have a personalised, monitoring and support programme.

This means having support, guidance and professional review (GPR) arrangements in place to help the teacher progress from a support teacher role to a qualified teacher role. He or she must have qualified teacher status (QTS) and sufficiently progress through each of the stages of the induction programme.

Some schools have set up regular one-to-one meetings and checklists, to more specific queries such as “can an NQT lead a school trip or class?”

There needs to be a focus for the observation so that it is meaningful and this should be followed up with a professional discussion so the NQT benefits from exploring the rationale behind the lesson and how it has an impact on student learning.

If it is possible to establish an on-going peer-to-peer observation relationship with more experienced teachers and NQTs then this can be beneficial to gain experience of working in different school phases or contexts.

However, if an NQT will be leaving a school before the next formal assessment, the headteacher should complete an interim assessment to ensure that performance and progress are tracked. The headteacher must also notify the appropriate body when the NQT has left the school.

At the NQT’s new school, the headteacher must contact the appropriate body linked to the previous school to get relevant information about the induction and copies of any assessments, including the interim assessment.

Further information

• Induction for NQTs (England): Statutory guidance for appropriate bodies, headteachers, school staff and governing bodies (Department for Education, revised September 2015): http://bit.ly/1PzAQEb

• Teachers’ Standards: Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies (Department for Education, July 2011): http://bit.ly/1MAMW7j


• NQT induction and activity advice from the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London: http://bit.ly/1j77VJe

• PDF downloadable: Suggested CPD activities to help achieve targets within the Teachers’ Standards: http://bit.ly/NQTCPD

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Looking after your wellbeing

The Education Support Partnership is a charity dedicated to helping teachers cope with the demands of the job. Chief executive Julian Stanley advises on how NQTs can safeguard their wellbeing.

Working for the Education Support Partnership, I recognise the need for practical advice for NQTs to help make those first few months (and years) of teaching a little easier.

In line with this and our latest campaign – #NotQuittingTeaching – I wanted to share some highlights from our online self-help tool www.bewellatwork.co.uk. I hope that this tool and the advice below can help you be at your best as you continue in your NQT year and beyond.

Is teaching the loneliest of jobs?
Teaching can be a lonely job, especially for the first few years of your career, as you often struggle because you are not sure who to talk to about your problems and are (wrongly) concerned that speaking out might represent a career-limiting move.

We start by “normalising” any negative feelings callers may be experiencing, explaining that many (if not all new teachers) go through exactly the same thing and that the best way forward is to talk.

We discuss who in their school might be able to help. A mentor, a colleague, the school’s executive head or another senior leader, or even an independent advisor can be a valuable source of support.

And then we bemoan our students’ lack of independent learning. This “osmosis” anticipates learning to be an absorption process, which we all know is only one way.

All learning should be explicit. It is why I am evangelical about skills-led learning. Let your students know, is only one way.

Make explicit the need for communication, problem-solving, organisation, leadership. Motivate them with a question, not a command. If they have the skills employers want them to develop. They are the same skills used across all their subjects (other teachers may not be telling them this!).

Let them lead their learning
Try to avoid being the gate-keeper of learning. Ask your students to find a way into it. Okay, so it needs careful planning and it is time-consuming, but students love it when you ask them to find the best way to overcome a problem that you have set.

Let them experiment, get it wrong and use trial and error to find the right answer. It is not an overnight solution, but it gives access to learning that students will love.

Confidence
Research shows young people struggle to maintain confidence in their learning. It is for all the reasons I have listed so far.

Be careful you do not join the brigade of teachers who control the learning process so closely that it means education is “done to” the students, rather than “along with” them.

You need to inspire the next generation to worry about! You need to inspire the next generation to

You now have a term’s worth of lessons under your belt and you will be growing in confidence. Phil Parker poses some questions to help you reflect on the learning that your students are receiving in your classroom.

Balance are you enjoyed your own education? There probably is something inspired you to become a teacher but not everyone has the possibility that your transformation from learner to teacher carries with it factors that listed in that former category which can often get overlooked.

This category is the student, whose experience of education may not be quite as rosy as yours, and needs to be inspired to engage and succeed in learning. I have tried to encapsulate my thinking into five areas to inspire effective learning in your lessons.

A student perspective
Think about your lessons from your students’ perspective. Try to get inside their heads and understand what your teaching is doing for them. There is always a danger you need for “content” is so great it overlooks the learning process.

It is the meta-cognitive processes that children and adolescents must undertake with a brain that is busy re-rewiring itself, with a frontal lobe that is not fully formed yet. As adults it is easy to overlook this. Young people do not find reasoning easy, yet it is a key skill we demand of them. It is what their underdeveloped frontal lobe struggles to cope with. Therefore it is not surprising that they get stressed if they feel their teacher does not understand these difficulties.

You are seen by them as a success story. You do not know how you can possibly understand their difficulties? You need to be seen to try.

Educational osmosis
I am fond of using the phrase “educational osmosis”. In that rush to demonstrate progress in under an hour, it is tempting to become the Pied Piper and let students stumble along behind you, unsure where they are going and unable to navigate the journey.

And then we bemoan our students’ lack of independent learning. This “osmosis” anticipates...
Advice from the second year

Last year, SecEd readers followed the trials, tribulations and successes of our NQT diarist. Now in her second year of teaching, she offers her advice for this year’s NQT cohort.

You are almost one full term into your NQT year. Compared to your training, this is a year of further freedom and autonomy within your classrooms and departments – but of course this comes with continued assessment and development.

This year, the pace of paperwork and observations is significantly less and this should only get better as you progress. I hope you are feeling more independent and able to explore your own teaching style, creativity and influence over your own groups. Based on my first year at the chalkface last year, here are some hints to help you all manage your NQT year effectively.

Take opportunities to network around the school, within other departments on both academic and recreational activities. It raises your profile and it also helps you to feel more confident in your environment.

No assumptions

Never assume you know how to approach and engage a class. It can be easy to guess what pupils may respond to and even easier to listen to colleagues’ opinions of their experiences of classes or individuals. I have done the same.

Thankfully, I have had one or two moments of realisation, when pupils reveal unexpected distractions or not concentrating has been fully engaged and keen to participate.

Removing those preconceptions and creating your own assessment of them is the key to the pupils’ amazing results. To enable this, use plenty of positive sanctions, even the easy ones like verbal praise, stamps or a smile. Praise is always needed to be received.

Likewise be consistent and fair, and if you say you are going to ring home, do it; if you threaten a detention, then set it!

Quality teaching

Don’t get me wrong – I still make mistakes and misjudge lessons and pupils’ ability, but you need to just keep going. Wherever possible, plan to model good work, scaffold pupils who struggle and structure activities with extensions.

This can over time become a normal part of your planning.

Pupils are often unable to unpack a task alone (especially year 7) – it comes with practice and maturity. So give them the practice. For example, for year 7 assessments this term I have had to work hard to prepare and enable pupils to be successful against their new “master statements” as part of our post-levels assessment system.

I have used a marking scheme for pupils to identify the skills and qualities of their work to familiarise themselves with the expectations.

Time

Be honest with yourselves, it is a marathon not a sprint. There will always be demands to meet – whether it is planning, marking, securing the learning – however long you have been teaching.

I have found that maintaining a consistent approach to workload helps. Make sure you are not working every night and keep your personal commitments.

Just as important – make sure you communicate with mentors, buddies or key colleagues who can encourage and direct you effectively.

Sometimes you are told that the autumn term is the most intense. However, don’t be fooled into thinking that spring or summer will get quieter. Spring term is just as intense because of the summer exams and early assessment.

Support

Year team and pastoral support is vital. Make sure you discuss your experiences with your school’s pastoral teams.

Sometimes last year I felt as if pupil X only ever misbehaved in my classroom. If you never raise something like this as a concern or try to find out why, you are in danger of thinking that it is your failing. Just ask!

The pupil may, actually, behave in the same way elsewhere – but they may also be amazing students elsewhere. Either way, take the opportunity to observe pupils in other lessons to try and understand how you can engage them more in your own lessons.

Experiment

Use your school ethos and CPD sessions to gain ideas for teaching and learning. As a school, we have embarked on TEEP (the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme) training which has sparked a real focus on and motivation for improving teaching and learning this year.

Reflections on my first term...

We are constantly self-evaluating as we are taught to do in our training, but it is important not to dwell on mistakes too much – we must learn from them and move on.

Potentially looking at some ICT programs to make the tasks easier and more seamless, but I would not like to be doing anything other than teaching. Having said that, I think we can all agree that the two-week Christmas break is going to be embraced with open arms!

SecEd’s NQT diarist this year is a teacher of sociology and philosophy from a school in the South of England. She was SecEd’s NQT diarist during the 2014/15 academic year.
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