

Welcome to SecEd's NQT special edition. The following eight pages offer crucial advice as you approach the end of your first term at the chalkface. First, **Chris Keates** asks if you are receiving all the rights that you are entitled to as an NQT



Teaching is one of the best, most satisfying and worthwhile of the professions. It is also highly demanding and challenging. There has been much recent political debate on qualified teacher status (QTS) following the coalition government's decision to remove the requirement for all teachers to hold QTS in schools in England.

The NASUWT is quite clear that children and young people are entitled to be taught by qualified teachers and that when parents send their children to school they have a right to know they are being taught by qualified teachers. The removal of the requirement on schools to recruit qualified teachers undermines the status of the profession and compromises the quality of educational provision.

Teaching is a post-graduate profession and NQTS work hard to secure QTS. In recognition of the skill and talent required to become a teacher, NQTS have a number of statutory and other entitlements, specifically

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designed to ensure that their induction year provides a structured and high-quality introduction into the profession. In England and Wales the range of statutory provisions which schools are required by law to provide include:

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

The induction period is intended to lay firm and positive foundations and provide a positive start to professional development and a career in teaching.

While some NQTS have a positive and supportive experience, unfortunately others do not receive not only their induction entitlements, but also are denied fundamental and important contractual provisions such as guaranteed PPA time, which, when taken together with their induction time, should result in a reduction in timetabled teaching time of 20 per cent.

NQTS welcome developmental and supportive classroom observation, in which they meet with the observer prior to the lesson to discuss the focus of

the observation and have verbal and written feedback afterwards which highlights all the positives observed and constructively details the areas for development. It is the quality, not quantity, of classroom observation which is important and it is disappointing that there are still too many NQTS who report being observed, sometimes excessively so, with no feedback or constructive comment.

NQTS are entitled as part of their induction to have timetabled classes with whom they can work on a regular basis to allow them to gain experience and build a rapport with pupils. It is not acceptable for a NQT to be allocated classes of pupils who are known to exhibit extremely challenging behaviour even with the most experienced of teachers.

The NASUWT believes that provisions should be in place to ensure that in whatever school an NQT begins their career, they have a consistent, high-quality experience which instils confidence and nurtures the passion new teachers need to continue in the profession.

An extremely worrying trend which has increased in recent years is for NQTS to be placed on temporary contracts in their induction year; usually for schools to keep open their options on performance or budget (or both).

Induction should not be conducted under the constant shadow of fear that a contract will not be renewed and made permanent.

Equally concerning is the number of NQTS who cannot find even a temporary placement for their induction year and who therefore work on supply. A recent NASUWT survey of supply teachers found that they are routinely denied access to training, have

their pay and conditions entitlements flouted, and are routinely expected to teach outside their specialism or age-range. This is no way for an NQT to begin their career. This is one of the key reasons why the NASUWT has developed a programme to support supply teachers, including dedicated seminars and "SupplyAdvisor", a website that enables supply teachers to rate agencies and share valuable information about terms and conditions.

The growth in the use of temporary contracts and the increasing number of NQTS working on supply has underlined even more strongly the importance of our campaign for a guaranteed placement for all NQTS in their induction year, a scheme which already works successfully for new teachers in Scotland.

The NASUWT encourages and seeks regular feedback from NQTS to enable us to identify the specific challenges they are facing and provide the support and advice needed. The union has an extensive network of support and provides comprehensive advice and guidance.

Our NQT induction planner, which is free to members, guides NQTS through the induction year giving useful prompts, tips and advice. This is complemented by a programme of professional seminars for NQT members throughout their induction year. These events offer NQTS the opportunity to receive advice, support and professional development, as well as network with other NQTS from across the UK.

New teachers are the future of the education service and a precious resource not to be squandered. We will continue to support, advise and defend them. SecEd

• Chris Keates is general secretary of the NASUWT.

There are a range of challenges that NQTS can face in their first year at the chalkface. **Julian Stanley** offers some coping strategies

It is nearing the end of the first term, a term during which you will more than likely have felt under pressure – the hard reality of not just controlling, but actually inspiring a class of fresh, young faces; getting on with the tidal wave of paperwork; and handling the one-too-many extra-curricular or additional tasks that you have probably said yes to. Every year, the Teacher Support Network helpline is inundated with calls from NQTS struggling to cope. Below, I share some practical advice from our counsellors who help these teachers to make the transition from trainee to fully fledged educator successfully.

Be organised

First thing's first – be organised. As a trainee or NQT you will bring some great, fresh and innovative ideas to the classroom. This is welcome in schools, but planning takes time. Remember that you are not expected to reinvent the wheel for every lesson. There are plenty of existing schemes of work, school and online resources which can be adapted to suit the needs of your students.

Marking

Assessment or marking is a real bugbear for many

The challenges of the chalkface

teachers. Giving quality feedback to students is very important, but it doesn't always have to be time-consuming. Talk to your mentor or induction tutor about different types of assessment, such as peer-marking, students marking their own work, or verbal feedback. Using a variety of approaches will keep students on their toes and help ease marking workloads.

As part of the National Agreement, all teachers in England and Wales are entitled to a minimum 10 per cent of their timetabled teaching time guaranteed for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). NQTS should receive both the 10 per cent PPA time and their 10 per cent NQT induction time. Make sure you get this within your timetabled school day.

Dealing with stress

It is vital to remember that you are not alone – most new teachers find their first years challenging. Try the following:

Manage your workload: marking, planning, writing reports, preparing for Ofsted – it can all mount up quickly. It is vital to keep a healthy work/life balance. Instead of leaving work earlier and continuing into the early hours at home, stay at school to complete work tasks but make sure you leave at a set time. Having distinct spaces for work and personal life will allow you to switch off more easily at home so you can relax and come back to work feeling refreshed.

Focus on what you can control: write a list of all the things that are causing you stress. Divide the list into things you can and cannot control. Focus on the things you can control and put them in priority order. What needs to be done now? What can be put back until later?

Don't have all the answers: others will not expect you to know everything or have all the answers, so don't expect this of yourself. Ask questions. After all, you are still learning and developing your skills and experience.

Know what is expected of you: make sure you are clear of what is expected of you in your new role. Check your contract, terms and conditions and talk to your union. This will help you to manage your time and others' expectations.

Talk to someone: don't be afraid to voice your concerns, whether that's with trusted colleagues, friends or by speaking to a counsellor on our support line.

Saying no at work

Many NQTS we speak to say they feel uncomfortable saying no because they don't want to disappoint others, have had a negative experience turning down additional tasks in the past, or don't want to be viewed as lazy or uncooperative. It is important to first understand what your job duties entail; don't agree to do something that you know will cause you undue stress or physical effort. Also think about how you can negotiate what you are being asked to do and try to offer alternative options to the person asking you. For example, would you feel more able to do the task if you were not doing it alone? You can always politely decline without saying no: "Thank you for considering me for this. Let me check my diary before I commit."

Take care of yourself

As a teacher, school will often occupy your thoughts even when you are away from work. Achieving a good work/life balance will help minimise stress levels and

will benefit your overall professional effectiveness as a teacher. It is important to leave time for interests and hobbies outside of school. Make time for friends and family – these will all help to boost your personal wellbeing. Headteacher Allison Collis advises new teachers: "Ensure at least one day a week is totally work free – many new teachers work too long hours and too hard, get run down and are then poorly. A day a week is an absolute minimum rest requirement – no emails, no marking, no planning – completely switch off!"

CPD

You must take a lead in finding and selecting your own CPD opportunities. This may be included in your school network or through private providers. Look into taking on formal additional qualifications such as the Excellent Teacher Scheme or Advanced Skills Teachers. The Teacher Learning Academy can also offer practice-based learning, supported by peers. Improving your skills will only make you feel more confident in the classroom and help you to improve areas of weakness, which can relieve stress.

Finally...

You've made it this far – congratulations! Remember your health and wellbeing is paramount. If you feel like you are overwhelmed by your workload, make sure you seek help and put in place some of these practical tips to help reduce stress. It will give you much more confidence in your ability and allow you to enjoy the job you love. SecEd

• Julian Stanley is chief executive of the Teacher Support Network. Visit www.teachersupport.info or call 08000 562 561 (England), 08000 855088 (Wales).

