

Supporting our amazing NQTs

Welcome to *SecEd's* NQT special edition. The next eight pages offer valuable and practical advice to both trainee and newly qualified teachers across the UK.

Editor **Pete Henshaw** explains

Congratulations to all NQTs out there as you approach the end of your first year at the chalkface. What an achievement it is to have survived what will no doubt be one of the toughest years of your career.

Take a moment to think about how far you have come since last September, how much you have

learned, and what you and your students have achieved. All trainee teachers out there should also feel incredibly excited as they prepare to embark on their NQT years in September.

This NQT special edition, produced with support from our friends at the NASUWT, is designed to offer new teachers everywhere advice, guidance, empathy, solidarity and much more as you approach your summer break and prepare for September.

Over the following pages, we look at a range of issues that affect new teachers and offer practical advice to help you improve your day-to-day working (and personal) lives. We start on page 13, with a focus on that eternal problem for teachers – work/life balance. We look at the problems that you can encounter if you are not careful and offer some tips to help you maintain some semblance of a personal life.

On page 14, we focus on the mentor-mentee relationship, which is crucial for new teachers. The article reflects on what makes an excellent mentor and mentee and is essential reading for trainee teachers as they prepare for their NQT year in September.

Sadly, false accusations do happen and it is something new teachers must be aware of. We look at how you can steer clear of any problems on page 15.

We also look at the importance of focusing on your CPD in year 2 (page 15), and offer some advice on how to approach the end of term, the summer break and

starting school again in September on page 16. The Teacher Support Network discusses some of the most common problems that NQTs contact them about and offers some resolutions (page 17), while our NQT diarist from last year offers some advice on what you can expect in year 2 (page 18).

The whole point of this section is to encourage all new teachers to take stock of what they have achieved. Yes, there will have been challenges and problems – maybe even disasters – but you must realise this is par for the course. You need to recognise these moments as part of the learning process and then focus more closely on what you have achieved.

Teaching is one of the most noble and proudest of professions and as you hopefully have already discovered, the highs by far outweigh the lows. Hold on to this and celebrate that you are making a difference to the future of this country and our schools. We are right behind you.

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It is vital that new teachers know their rights and entitlements as they adjust to life at the chalkface. The NASUWT's **Chris Keates** discusses the importance of supporting our NQTs and explains why and how the union is challenging government to help protect all teachers

Standing up for your NQT rights

This often goes hand-in-hand with a failure in schools to provide their contractual PPA time, which, when taken together with their induction time, should result in a maximum of 80 per cent contact time.

In some cases, where time is allocated regularly it has in the past often been eroded by activities such as cover which does not represent an effective use of teachers' time. The contractual provisions are designed to protect teachers in maintained schools from cover.

Many NQTs welcome developmental and supportive classroom observation but too many report being observed, sometimes excessively so, with no feedback or constructive comment.

Some are allocated classes of pupils who are known to exhibit extremely challenging behaviour even with the most experienced of teachers.

The NASUWT is deeply concerned that many of the reforms to education introduced by the coalition government are likely to seriously undermine the extent to which schools will be scrutinised to ensure they are abiding with their statutory responsibilities to NQTs.

“The best schools recognise the importance of growing and supporting new teachers and that they need support, encouragement and working conditions which enable them to gain appropriate experience”

The NASUWT is seriously concerned that the reforms will place NQTs under pressure to forgo their statutory induction entitlements, undermining their ability to gain the skills and knowledge they need to progress as a teacher.

NQTs need the confidence and security of a rigorous statutory framework which will ensure that they are managed effectively and positively and not in a way which chokes their enthusiasm and energy by failing to give them effective support during induction.

We believe that provisions should be in place to ensure that in whatever school an NQT begins their career they have a consistent, high-quality experience.

NQTs work long and hard to secure qualified teacher status. It is an important qualification which is a cornerstone of the universal entitlement of all children and young people to be taught by a qualified teacher.

It is deeply concerning that this requirement to



secure qualified teacher status in order to teach in maintained schools has been removed by the coalition government in England.

This not only seriously undermines the right of all pupils to be taught by highly trained and skilled professionals, it also threatens teachers' jobs in the future and makes it even more difficult for NQTs to secure employment if schools decide to opt for cheaper, unqualified personnel instead.

This move is a further attack on the status of the profession and is based on the erroneous belief that “anyone can teach”.

The NASUWT is deeply concerned that too many NQTs are placed on temporary contracts in their induction year – often for no other reason than “to see how they turn out”. This is unacceptable and disempowering for new teachers, as they fear poor reports and consequent job loss if they complain or raise concerns.

Those who are working on supply may fare even worse. 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.

It is for these reasons that the NASUWT is campaigning for a guaranteed placement for all NQTs in their induction year, a scheme which already works successfully for new teachers in Scotland.

In order to defend the teaching profession, the NASUWT launched its Standing up for Standards

campaign, the principal aim of which is to defend and secure all the statutory provisions to which all teachers, including NQTs, are entitled and which contribute to raising standards for all children and young people.

NASUWT members are engaged in continuous industrial action short of strike action in furtherance of our national trade dispute in defence of teachers' pay, pensions, working conditions and jobs.

Through their action, our members have been standing up for standards by defending teachers' pay and working conditions which are inextricably linked to the provision of the highest quality of education.

The NASUWT knows that understandably some NQTs may feel anxious about industrial action. But the union also knows that they recognise it is a demonstration of commitment to the students they teach that they want to join with other colleagues to fight for the entitlement of all young people to be taught by those who are recognised and rewarded as highly skilled professionals, and to fight for working conditions which enable them to focus on teaching and learning.

It is because of this that our action is winning the hearts and minds of the public and parents and empowering teachers to stand up for their professionalism.

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

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

Finding your balance

In your first years as a teacher, it can be easy to push yourself too far. **Dorothy Lepkowska** looks at how NQTs and second-year teachers can find that all-important work/life balance

When Hugh Brenton's girlfriend walked out on him two years into their relationship, he realised he had to change his lifestyle. The couple had met during Hugh's PGCE year and moved in when he got his first job as a geography teacher in a secondary school in the North East of England.

"The problem was quite clearly my work and how it was impacting on our lives," said the 32-year-old. "I was getting up at 6am to be in school for 7am and often not returning home until after 6pm. Then I had two or three hours of marking or preparation ahead of me.

"I can see now that this would test the patience of a saint, but unless you actually teach it's hard to understand the pressures. We were spending less and less time together and Sarah would be going out with friends or just watching television on her own. The demands of my job were affecting her terribly, though I didn't appreciate it at the time."

Workload remains one of the big areas of dissatisfaction for teachers of all ages and levels of experience. A survey earlier this year, which compared the working hours of teachers and MPs, found that secondary teachers typically work an average of 50 hours a week, while a secondary head could easily clock up close to 58 hours.

One of Hugh's big mistakes, he admitted, was volunteering too readily to be involved in the life of the school.

"I wanted to make a good impression by appearing keen, reliable, interested and one of the team, but all I did was spread myself too thinly," he said.

"During the first year I was involved in two drama productions, organising and participating in school trips and countless extra-curricular activities. It was too much and, as I later found out, not expected of me as an NQT. But if you offer to help out, of course, colleagues aren't going to say no because all teachers are pushed for time and welcome help."

“The two most common things that NQTs do that lead to a poor work/life balance are over-marking and over-planning, which can both add significantly to workload, and which aren't always necessary”

Tom Sherrington, headteacher of King Edward VI Grammar School, in Chelmsford, Essex, who writes a blog under the name of headguruteacher, said NQTs needed to remember that classroom practice is their priority in the first year or two, and most other aspects of their work should take second place.

"The two most common things that NQTs do that lead to a poor work/life balance are over-marking and over-planning, which can both add significantly to workload, and which aren't always necessary," he said. "With marking, it is partly because they haven't yet worked out a routine and so may feel that every single



piece of work needs to be marked. In fact, this is more than most pupils can absorb.

"What they need to do is mark those aspects that will be most effective in their teaching to ensure pupils have an understanding and good feedback and know what is expected of them."

Similarly, with lesson planning, NQTs should remember that heads of department and other colleagues will already have a stock of resources and ideas for lessons, and they don't need to plan all the material or develop resources from scratch.

"Typically an NQT may have 18 lessons a week so it just isn't possible to plan so many lessons. They don't need to reinvent the wheel because schemes of work will already be available. They shouldn't even need to ask because this level of support should be available to them already."

One of the big burdens facing teachers is the writing of pupil reports. For some, this could mean hundreds of individual entries.

"Some teachers, especially NQTs, need to be supported during report-writing time," Mr Sherrington said. "New teachers, in particular, won't be used to the intensity of this exercise."

He added that while many schools now use sophisticated systems that allow teachers to do reports online from home, this is a double-edged sword when it comes to work/life balance.

He advocates the use of statement banks that allow some corners to be cut in report-writing, without losing the personal touch and individual comments required to appraise each student.

Classroom management was also an important issue which, if mishandled, could result in teachers increasing their workload. "NQTs need to think carefully about sanctions, such as detentions. If they give out too many they are effectively putting themselves in detention because someone has to supervise it," Mr Sherrington added.

Anita Johnstone, a modern languages teacher in a Midlands academy, described how she almost suffered a breakdown during her first year of teaching because she took on too much.

"I wanted to show I was keen, able, professional and on top of everything," she said. Now in her third year of teaching she has learned to "be good to myself" – that includes taking one evening off during the week, as well as either Saturday or Sunday, from any school work, whether it is marking or lesson preparation.

"I was in melt-down by the end of my first year because I was doing far too much," Ms Johnstone, 26, said.

"I had allowed myself to become embroiled in the complex domestic difficulties of one of my form pupils, without seeking help from more senior and

experienced colleagues, which left me emotionally drained. This was a big mistake and I know now that I can't be a teacher and social worker and everything else, to every child. All this was on top of the French and Spanish clubs I was running, and various school trips and other activities that I was helping to organise and run.

“I wanted to make a good impression by appearing keen, reliable, interested and one of the team, but all I did was spread myself too thinly”

"I ended up with no time to myself at all. It felt like every waking hour was about work, and when I slept I dreamt about it. Then one evening I was invited to play netball by a friend.

Tips for achieving work/life balance

- As a new teacher you will need to learn to manage your time effectively, in a way that suits you and the lifestyle you want to have. It is essential for your health and wellbeing that you strike the right balance between work and life outside of it. If you feel it's all getting too much then ask for help. It doesn't make you weak or useless – it is a sign of strength and shows you are taking responsibility for yourself. Also:
- Familiarise yourself and make good use of available resources. You don't need to reinvent the wheel every time you plan a lesson. If in doubt, ask your head of department or a senior colleague.
 - You can say "no" to things you feel are not your job or responsibility.
 - Don't agree to any additional work if you are not coping with your existing duties, and don't volunteer for the sake of it.
 - If it is noisy in the staffroom, find somewhere

"I felt guilty going out when I had so much work to do, but I found the physical activity and meeting new people gave me a huge boost. When it came to work the next day I went in with a smile on my face instead of feeling tired and full of trepidation about what the day would bring."

She advocated that NQTs try to maintain the hobbies they enjoyed before entering teaching, or to find new ones, and to be careful who they socialise with: "It's easy in every job to socialise with people from work, especially if there are colleagues of the same age and you get on well. But I also make a point of seeing friends who are not teachers at least once a week so we don't end up talking 'shop' all night.

"Sometimes you just need to take a step back from it all and remember that other things are important."

Mr Sherrington agreed: "It's very difficult to make blanket statements about how best to manage work/life balance, as this is more important to some people than others.

"Some teachers love their jobs so much they would devote every waking hour to it, but it's fair to say that most teachers need that balance to have a fulfilled life in and outside of school."

• Dorothy Lepkowska is a freelance education journalist.

Further information

You can read Tom Sherrington's blog at <http://headguruteacher.com>

quiet to work and resolve to get done what you intended.

- Try to do jobs, such as marking, as you go along so it doesn't pile up.
- Don't feel you need to be the first person in, and the last out, of school every day.
- Make time for hobbies and leisure activities you enjoy. You will come into school feeling more refreshed and raring to go.
- Don't neglect friends and family and make time to see them.
- Designate one weekday night and one day during the weekend where work is off-limits.
- Keep as much holiday time as possible free for yourself. Don't save up work to do then.
- Do as much work as you can at school so you don't need to take it home, and don't put things off that can be done immediately. Prioritise tasks.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Mentors and mentees

The mentor-mentee relationship is crucial for new teachers. **Amy Benziane** reflects on what makes an excellent mentor and the qualities that mentees need to bring to the relationship

When I joined the teaching profession, it was ingrained in me that I should, at all times, be showing that I was in possession of one key characteristic – resilience.

There were others, of course, but that is the one which stuck with me when it was dark on my way both to and from work. Not wanting to give up, I actively asked for help and listened hard when colleagues, who I saw as far more worthy of a place at the front of a classroom than myself, imparted teaching expertise. It is this same keenness to reflect on and always find a solution to arising challenges, which guides my work now as a mentor.

What makes a marvellous mentor?

Unless our end goal is a conveyor belt which creates identical (and most probably dissatisfied!) teachers at the end of an NQT year, developing and nurturing individual style and talent is key as a mentor. In order to develop our colleagues we must remember the adage that freedom brings responsibility.

So, how do we as professionals accurately interpret a situation so that, while giving our mentees freedom to experiment, we do not allow them to blindly continue down a path that we know, from experience, may lead to more problems than solutions? Looking back on what I appreciated from my mentor, I feel that there are three key aspects to success – shared responsibility; strong, supportive relationships; reflective target-setting.

1, Shared responsibility

Whether you have never mentored or whether you have mentored year after year, there will always be a different set of challenges each time around. Therefore it is important to share the burden and ensure that both mentor and mentee take responsibility for developing the NQT as a teacher.

For example, if your NQT misses a meeting or a deadline, while irritating this should equally spark in the mentor a time for reflection. Was I clear in my communication? Have I been approachable? Did I mention it on the corridor in passing or in a clear email? Has my mentee been caught up with something else due to time-management problems – in which case, what can we do about it?

If there is no way you as a mentor could have foreseen and intervened then perhaps there are other issues at work – ones which need to be investigated through honest discussions. Which leads me onto my next point...

2, Strong, supportive relationships

As mentors, we do not need to be accessible at all hours, available to listen to streams of moaning and ranting to be supportive. Mentees, as colleagues who are a few years behind us in their career, are not there to be counselled, but are there to be guided.

Listening to ideas respectfully and using your expertise to question and suggest ideas is key in building a strong and successful relationship. As a teacher, I try to avoid dominating the classroom and taking over with too much of my own “talk” and, as a rule, I try to do the same with my mentees.

There is no way that a mentor relationship will be the same with every trainee or NQT and so it is important to discover how to build a supportive relationship. Does the mentee prefer email communication so that they can reflect on an issue before a meeting, or would they appreciate a quick face-to-face chat instead?

Finally, your mentee already knows you are more experienced, but you don’t want them thinking that you are the only one to always have all the right answers. It’s intimidating.

Sometimes it is okay to act like you have just heard of that wacky-sounding technique. You were genuinely impressed with it the first time around so why dash their hopes by making them think they are doing something boring when it’s innovative?



Giving praise where it is due acts as an important part of raising your colleague’s confidence in their ability as well as helping to strengthen your professional relationship.

“Your mentor may have the best intentions but if you try to hide away the gaps in your knowledge (whether subject or pedagogical) they won’t be able to support you as well as if you were honest”

3, Reflective target-setting

At some point over the year, perhaps even in the first week, there will be a time when you need to break some bad news and start to set some targets for improvement. A few tips have been thrown my way by more experienced members of staff.

Two of the key tips for target-setting are to use “headlines” and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based) targets. When you have just had someone watch your lesson the last thing you want to hear is 10 minutes of fluff before you get to the answer of whether or not the lesson was acceptable, good even.

Headlines are exactly what they sound like; they involve giving a brief overall comment to set the tone of the feedback. Such as: “Thank you for that lesson. It was obvious that you had a clear plan and I would like to talk about how we can tighten up your timings to make sure you fit everything in.”

After which, using open questioning techniques, both mentor and mentee can then work to co-construct targets and review times. This reflective cycle is important to avoid mentees feeling as though they are being dictated to and to allow them to develop their practice how they want.

Such an approach may mean reflecting on our own practice while developing your colleague, something that should be seen as a perk of the role. However, sometimes there needs to be explicit direction, both to ensure the NQT is able to progress adequately during their induction period, and to ensure that student wellbeing and progress are prioritised. In which case, the mentor needs to be confident enough to direct rather than merely act as a springboard for ideas.

What makes a marvellous mentee?

Reflecting back on my training year, I would describe

myself as naïve, enthusiastic, underprepared, inspired – there are probably a few more negatives I could come up with too. Perhaps you can recognise yourself in that description too. I found that three key approaches helped me to survive.

1, Organisation

There is absolutely no point in a to-do list unless it is colour-coded, or at the very least uses subheadings. This is no joke, the to-do list is a powerful thing. When you look at it midweek and it’s grown from a small sticky note to a sprawling mess of colourful pieces of paper that are more confusing than helpful, you know you are in trouble.

Prioritising your needs can be simple using a “Priority Matrix” rather than a regular to-do lists. These work on the premise that there are four different types of tasks:

- Urgent and important: making sure today’s lesson resources are printed.
- Urgent and not important: a conversation with a colleague who has lost their favourite mug.
- Not urgent but important: completing reports due in a week.
- Not urgent and not important: Non-work-related Facebook/Twitter browsing.

If all your tasks are falling into the “urgent and important” category, perhaps you need some forward planning in your life. Make sure you check deadlines and enter them onto a calendar, you can do it electronically and have reminders sent to you a few days before.

2, Be honest and reflective

Whatever it is that makes someone a great learner or a marvellous mentee, it is not simply nodding along when people tell you, “don’t worry, it’ll be easier by Easter!”

Your mentor may have the best intentions but if you try to hide away the gaps in your knowledge (whether subject or pedagogical) they won’t be able to support you as well as if you were honest.

Acting infallible only seems to set you up for failure. This doesn’t mean butting into your mentor’s classroom every five minutes wailing that it is all going wrong. It is about being smart and asking yourself what you have done to rid yourself of this challenge before you give up and decide that it is always going to be as difficult as it currently is.

For example, reviewing the targets you have set with your mentor and thinking about who can support you in achieving them is an important part of improving your practice. The induction period has you at its centre, so it is important that you drive it, preparing yourself for training sessions or meetings and ensuring you are building your relationship with your mentor so that you feel positive about your time as an NQT.

3, Think of the children!

The best and perhaps most obvious reminder I can give is that you are working for the students. Although they may show their appreciation for your hard work in the quirkiest of ways, they will appreciate your consistent hard work.

However, part of this is knowing why you are

doing things. If you are not doing it for the students then why are you completing the task? If those under your pupilage will genuinely progress further in your subject because you arrive at work earlier than other colleagues and leave later then brilliant, but if they would be better off with a less sleep-deprived teacher then have a rest!

If someone’s given you some feedback that you don’t quite appreciate, remind yourself why they are trying to help improve your practice. I once had someone comment that: “One of the girls was doodling for the first eight minutes of the 15-minute task you set.”

How did I respond? Did I take it as a personal attack on my lack of 360 vision? Did I try to defend myself about the artistic merit of the doodles and link them to the learning which was obviously going on?

Or did I take the time to think and understand that yes, as I am there for the students, it makes sense that I should be informed of what they are doing, so that next time I will keep the girl on task and she will have more of a chance of progressing?

“Whatever it is that makes someone a great learner or a marvellous mentee, it is not simply nodding along when people tell you, ‘don’t worry, it’ll be easier by Easter!’”

Conclusion

Having the experience of being an unqualified teacher so recently and taking on a mentoring role for both PGCE and NQTS I feel I have a reasonable overview of both sides.

Being a mentor is a brilliant role to have and we should feel humbled to be a part of shaping the future of the education system. As such, both as mentors and as mentees, we must remember to be professional, grateful and honest with one another in order to allow the relationship to blossom and be fruitful so that every teacher feels like they deserve a place at the front of the classroom and stop feeling like a participant on Faking It, as I did at the start of my career!

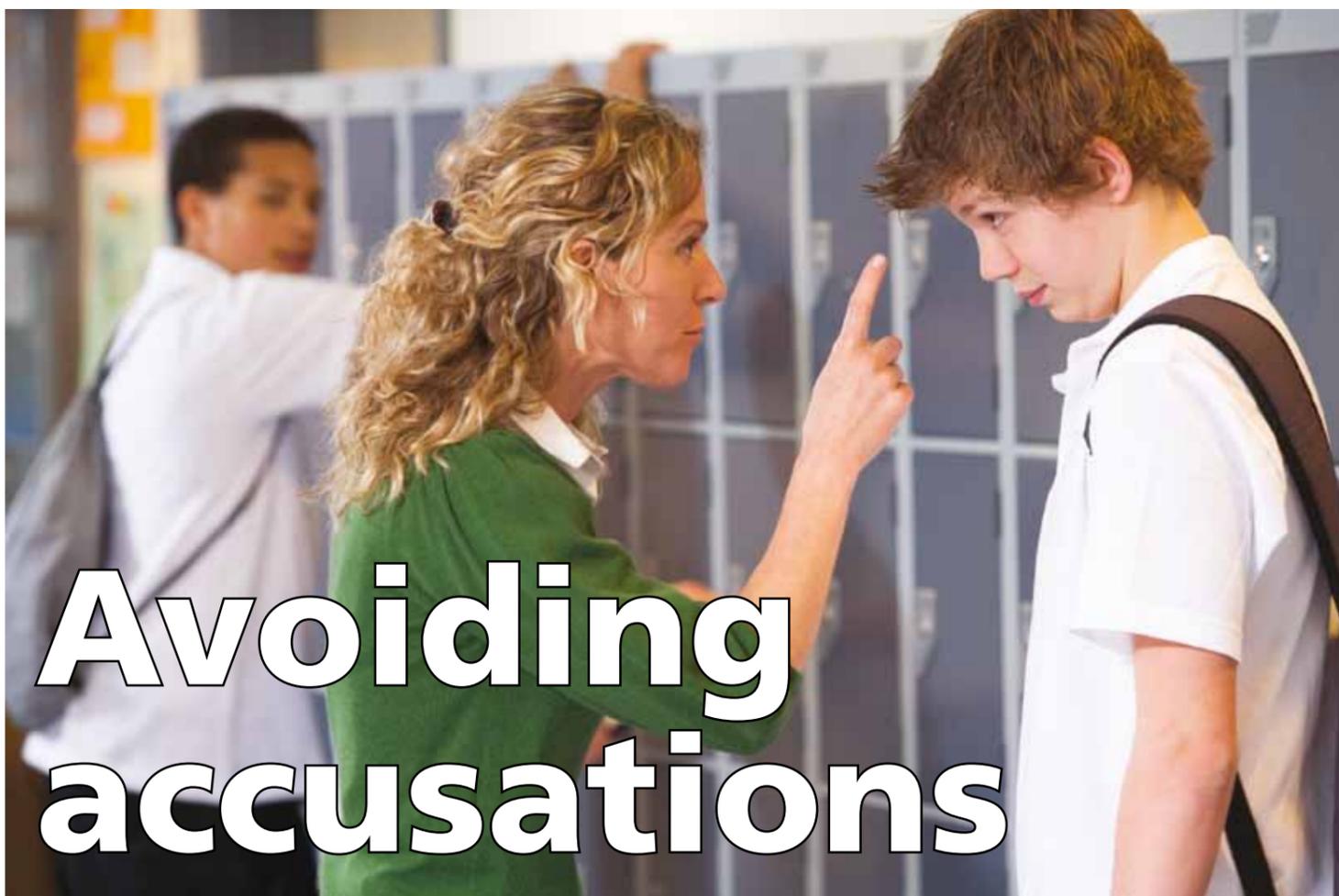
• Amy Benziane is teaching and learning co-ordinator within the English department at Woodside High School in north London.

Further information

Priority Matrix: <http://vimeo.com/19138421>



Sadly, new teachers must be aware of the dangers of pupils who make false accusations. **Dorothy Lepkowska** looks at some recent cases and offers advice on how to avoid being falsely accused



Avoiding accusations

A seemingly everyday event in a school corridor triggered a nightmare few days for Ben Roberts. The, now 35-year-old head of department had barely been a teacher for a term, when a pupil accused him of assault.

"I was walking along the corridor when I spotted a scuffle between two pupils, so I intervened," he said. "In the course of trying to separate them, I was accused of hurting one of the boys, but in fact he had tried to take a punch at me thinking I was the other pupil. I grabbed him by the wrist and pulled him away.

"In my mind I was congratulating myself about my swift and decisive action and for not allowing the incident to escalate into something more dangerous, not realising that behind my back the boys were plotting to get me into trouble."

Later that same day, in May 2011, Mr Roberts was called into the head's office to explain his actions. One of the year 9 students was demanding to be taken to hospital claiming that the teacher had assaulted him. He had already called his father, who had arrived at the school demanding Mr Roberts be dismissed.

It was the most ludicrous situation and at first I laughed because the claims were too absurd to be taken seriously. But by the look on the head's face I could see it wasn't a laughing matter. I was in serious trouble

"It was the most ludicrous situation and at first I laughed because the claims were too absurd to be taken seriously. But by the look on the head's face I could see it wasn't a laughing matter. I was in serious trouble," he said.

Questioning of the two boys by the head suggested they had conspired to get the teacher into trouble. "It was a big joke for them," he said. "I had put one of them in detention the previous week so he was looking to get back at me. For me, this was serious and it felt like my career was on the line."

Luckily, the head believed his staff member even though the parent threatened to involve the police. Realising the joke was out of hand, one of the boys eventually admitted their story was made up and Mr Roberts was in the clear. "I have no idea how you

protect teachers from these situations," he said. "In a heartbeat your career can be on the line for the most innocuous comment or action, however innocent or well-intentioned."

Teaching unions have been campaigning for changes to the law to allow staff who are victims of malicious allegations to remain anonymous. Last year, ministers agreed to anonymity for the accused until such time as they are charged, amid claims in a report that almost half of all allegations made by pupils against teachers were false.

The government-commissioned study found that 47 per cent of claims by pupils against teachers were unfounded, while 12 per cent were investigated by police. Six per cent led to dismissal, while only three per cent resulted in a conviction or caution.

Teachers' leaders said that many police investigations were initiated by parents, even when the school had ruled out the need for any further action. At the time the figures were published, Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, called for police services to make it clear on Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks whether an accused teacher has been exonerated.

"At the moment, the whole system is fragmented and there is too much variation in practice," Ms Keates said. "An allegation can follow a teacher for the rest of their career, even if it is unsubstantiated. If it is recorded on a CRB form, the view of a governing body is there is no smoke without fire."

Tim Jones, a maths teacher in London, was accused by a year 11 pupil of assault after he persistently ignored her romantic interest in him during his first year at the school as an NQT. "She was undoubtedly an attractive girl, who was supremely confident and not used to a male showing no interest in her, as she was very popular with the boys," Mr Jones said. "I had to meet her once, individually, to discuss her work and an assignment she was late in submitting, and she later accused me of trying to kiss her."

Fortunately, one of the girl's friends stepped in and backed up Mr Jones. "She had been waiting outside the room and was watching our meeting through the window," he said. "I was very lucky. The pupil told the head the claims were untrue, that the girl fancied me

and she had seen me do nothing untoward. The girl later admitted that she'd lied and was very sheepish around me for the rest of her time at the school."

Crushes by pupils on teachers are common but fraught with danger especially when there may be little difference in age between a 6th-former, for example, and an NQT. Advice from teaching unions is that teachers, however much flattered they are by the attention, should not engage with pupils in any out of school communication using text messaging or other media, or solicit or respond to requests to link up on social networking sites such as Facebook. Teachers who want to use Twitter might consider protecting

their tweets so only approved followers can see them. The most effective protection for teachers against malicious allegations is to be sensible and vigilant, and for teachers not to expose themselves, however unwittingly, to situations which can lead to false claims.

Mr Roberts added: "It sounds awful to advise NQTS to be wary of pupils but assume someone will tell a lie about you at some point in your career and be on your guard. These are adolescents who are coping with peer pressure and raging hormones, so anything could happen."

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• Dorothy Lepkowska is a freelance education journalist.

Talking CPD

CPD beyond NQT

David Weston discusses why NQTS should focus on their CPD during year two

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU have almost completed your NQT year and finished the induction process in becoming a teacher.

With the reduced teaching load that you have had during your initial training and NQT year, you will have had a chance to reflect on your practice and learn a huge number of techniques and teaching approaches.

Many of these have now become ingrained and instinctive and you have probably found yourself thinking less about how to deal with the small details of what you do and concentrating more on the larger challenges. When you start teaching again next year, these refined instincts and your increased confidence will make everything much easier.

On the other hand, next year you will have a higher teaching load and less time to plan, to mark, and to reflect on your practice. It will be very tempting to use every available minute for planning and marking and not leave yourself time to think about your practice. However, while it is very helpful to have developed all these instinctive habits, it also means that it is harder to keep improving as a teacher as changing a habit is much more challenging than learning a new skill.

Many teachers fall into the trap of never properly examining their classroom instincts and, instead, they focus on constantly trying new things. There is a never-ending supply of possible innovations for your classroom, but it is important to remember that some of the best ways to help your pupils learn more effectively are the basics – the way you ask questions, the way you respond, and the way you explain the fundamental ideas.

Focus on learning

Keep focusing on specific pupil learning. Don't fall in

to the trap of trying to make general improvements to your practice – e.g. "questioning" or "differentiation" – this is too vague to evaluate if you've had an impact.

Instead, pick a very small subsection of a topic at any one time and spend several weeks examining how you can improve the learning of a few pupils in this specific area. You'll naturally make improvements in practice which will be more widely applicable, but the focus on individuals and specifics is more effective.

Collaborate and debate

Research shows that you're much more likely to change your habits and improve your practice if you work on it with colleagues. It is important to discuss the best approaches and look for research and expert advisors who can help you examine your preconceptions.

A good-natured debate about the best way to teach something to a certain type of pupil will help to make everyone's internalised ideas about learning explicit, which is an important first stage in changing practice.

Evidence

Evaluate, refine and sustain. Your first attempt at any new technique won't be ideal, and you need to evaluate the impact of any changes to your practice.

You can use qualitative measures (pupil interviews and lesson observations) as well as quantitative measures (progress assessments, standardised tests). It is important to spend several lessons working on one single idea. Use observations from colleagues, the data from your assessments, and advice from experts to continually refine the new approach. Video can be extremely helpful to allow you to reflect and discuss.

• David Weston is the chief executive of the Teacher Development Trust. TDT is the national charity for effective professional development which also runs a free database of CPD at <http://GoodCPDGuide.com>. For more advice on improving your practice, see the TDT blog at <http://TDTTrust.org/blog> or sign up for the National Teacher Enquiry Network newsletter.

Tips to avoid false accusations:

- Familiarise yourself with the school's child protection policy and make sure your actions reflect the contents.
- If you are involved in an incident that you believe may compromise your position, write down what happened, where and at what time, as well as the names of any witnesses who may be able to speak for you.
- Any allegations made about you by a pupil should be reported immediately to your union so that you can be advised and represented should the need arise.
- There are situations where you are allowed to restrain a child but, on the whole, you should avoid any personal physical contact however innocent and well-intentioned.
- If you need to meet with a pupil on a one-to-one basis, make sure there is another teacher or pupil in the vicinity, or that the door to the room is left open. If this is not possible, inform a colleague that the meeting is taking place.
- Never agree to, or suggest, a meeting with a pupil outside of school unless this has been approved by the headteacher.
- Refrain from accepting requests from pupils to link up on Facebook or other social networking sites, and do not solicit this sort of contact yourself. Protect your comments on Twitter and other social media.
- Never give a pupil your mobile or home telephone number or your address, and reveal as little as you can about your private life.
- Don't engage in text messaging or emailing pupils outside of school.
- Do not attempt to deal with blackmail or malicious allegations alone. Confide in the headteacher or another senior colleague, and seek support and advice from your union.

A checklist for the NQT

The end of the school year is in sight, but NQTs must be careful – it is important to finish your year in the right way, approach the summer properly, and also spare a thought about how to prepare for September.

Margaret Adams offers her survival checklist

You can hardly believe it. The end of the summer term is in sight. You are just about to complete your first year in teaching. Ahead of you are six glorious weeks of holiday.

Before you give your full attention to long days of doing just what you want to do, make sure you finish off this term, and this year, properly.

Give some thought to the autumn, too, so that you will be ready for the new school year. Create a checklist for the summer now. It will help you to round off your NQT year effectively.

The end of your NQT year

You have had a lot to do over the last three terms. Now is the time to make sure you finish off the year professionally.

First, check that you have done everything that senior people in school expect of you. Did you hand over all those lesson plans you were asked to submit? Have you made the right number of visits to observe other teachers at work? Have you written up your notes from mentoring sessions? Look through your diary and check that you have not overlooked anything.

Next, consider which activities you know you have struggled with during the year. Focus on tasks you managed to complete but which, if you are honest with yourself, you are not quite sure how you managed them. Before term ends learn how to do two of those tasks better. Get some hints and tips from your school's experts. Watch people at work. Ask questions. Learn new techniques.

Plan to avoid this trap. Give yourself permission to switch off from school. That means you will be committing yourself to do things that are unrelated to your life in school

You will be less likely to fret and worry over the summer about things you find difficult, if you demonstrate to yourself that you have a strategy for managing your on-going learning in place. You will also be making certain that the things you have found difficult this year will be less of a problem in September.

Finally, as you make your plans to end the year successfully, remind yourself of your achievements. You have experienced a complete school year.

You now know more than you did last year about how schools work and what is expected of teachers. You can be pleased with what you have achieved and how much you have learned. You have earned those congratulations you would like to offer yourself, so allow yourself a few moments to enjoy that feeling of success.

Here comes summer

You have not experienced what it is like to be on holiday as a teacher – yet. Summer holidays will be different now. The weeks sandwiched between the end of one academic year and the beginning of the next make up the summer holiday.

You are about to discover just how easy it is to allow the year that is finishing to spill over into the first weeks of your summer holiday, and then to be preoccupied with the coming term later in the summer.

Plan to avoid this trap. Prepare now to become someone else once the holiday starts. Give yourself permission to switch off from school. That means

you will be committing yourself to do things that are unrelated to your life in school.

In other words, give yourself permission to take a complete break from school life and stop being a teacher for a few weeks during the summer.

Remember, too, that holidays are the times when you have the opportunity to do things you cannot fit into your schedule during term time. That could mean going away for part of the holiday. It could mean choosing to spend time with people you have not had the chance to meet up with during the school year.

Maybe you also want to work on projects quite unrelated to school life that you can only do well when you are relaxed and when you can devote whole days to them. Plan to do those things, too. Find a space for these activities in your holiday schedule.

However, if you know you will need to prepare to teach new set texts or a different syllabus in September, note now when you plan to do your preparation and how many hours, or days, you intend to allocate to school work during the summer.

When you have made your decision, put the school-related tasks you intend to work on out of your mind. There is no need to feel guilty about taking time off when you still have work to do. You have organised your holiday so that you can accommodate preparation and relaxation.

Happy new year?

As you look ahead to the summer break, you might be tempted to think about the next academic year, too.

The most important thing you can do now to prepare for next year is to ensure that, before you go on holiday, you have a copy of your timetable for the autumn term in your possession. Make sure you know what, and who, you will be teaching in September.

Certainty now will help you to enjoy the summer holiday. Knowing your timetable will also help you to be confident that any preparations you make for next year will be relevant and useful.

Find out as well exactly which additional responsibilities you will be expected to take on in September. Most schools ensure that NQTs have a reduced timetable, but next year you will not be an NQT.

Ask senior people what else you will be expected to do. Will you have enhanced pastoral responsibilities? Will you be expected to contribute to assemblies? Might you be expected to take the lead in your department on a specific topic or aspect of the curriculum? Find out before the holiday and avoid nasty surprises in September.

Lastly, as you look ahead to the autumn, remind yourself of how much you have learned during your NQT year. You can complete tasks with ease today that you struggled with back in September. You have modified your views about some aspects of teaching in the light of your experience to date.

Use your knowledge to organise yourself so that you will be working effectively from the beginning of term in your second year in teaching. You know how your school works. You know, in broad terms, what is expected of you. That means you can plan ahead.

Write down your plans and put your notes somewhere safe. Look at them again next term. They will help to get you off to a flying start in September.

Checking out...

You are ready, or almost ready, to start your summer holiday. Before you leave your NQT year behind, remember you will never be an NQT again. The things you are doing now to finish off the year, to plan for the summer holiday and to prepare, as best you can, for the year ahead, are some of your final tasks as an NQT.

Each July from now on you will have your summer checklist at the back of your mind ready to help you prepare for the holiday.

Your checklist will enable you to enjoy the holiday, confident that you are prepared for the future. With summer just around the corner you really will be ready for that well-earned break. Go ahead and enjoy it. [SecEd](#)

• Margaret Adams is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a former teacher.



Fran – the story

The Teacher Support Network works to help teachers survive the many challenges and pressures of life at the chalkface. Based on their experience, **Julian Stanley** offers some advice for NQTs and young teachers

Iwant to tell you about Fran. Fran is not real. We made her up from the data we have from our Support Line. We have to, to protect identities, but her story is very true. Perhaps you will recognise her. Maybe she reminds you of a colleague. She might even be a lot like you. For Fran represents one of the highest groups of teachers who contact Teacher Support Network's Support Line: Fran is an NQT.

Fran is a woman. She is White and she has no disabilities. She is somewhere between 26 and 35-years-old and, naturally as an NQT, has only been in teaching for one to five years. She is likely to work at a state academy and earns between £15,000 and £16,000 a year.

Fran went into teaching because she was passionate – passionate about both her subject and about the children and young people she could help. Fran enjoyed her training and had a very positive placement. Some of Fran's friends have been lucky and gone on to successful second placements and are relishing their new careers, but Fran is not so lucky. Fran is struggling with her new placement.

We know that Fran will most probably call the Support Line at the end of the school day between 3pm and 4pm, and when she calls she will want to talk about her money issues, anxiety, stress, depression or absence from work. She will tell our counsellor that she has been suffering from stress for a relatively short period of time, but has now reached crisis point. She might say that the reality of the job is a shock compared to her expectations.

Possibly, she will say she feels like the expectations placed on her are very high and, as a result, she feels like she is failing. She might say that her confidence has been eroded and she is beginning to feel deskilled. She could tell our counsellor she is considering quitting the profession.

Or if we were telling the story in Fran's own words, it might sound something like this:

"I had a whole other career before I decided to give something back and train as a teacher. I was 26 when I started training and, while it was hard going, I found the training rewarding. On my training placement I had a great mentor and was teaching at

a 'good' school. I was looking forward to my first year on the job – it couldn't be that bad could it?

After a bit of a scramble I landed a job at a school that was under immense pressure. Inspection any day soon, parents expecting the best, a head running around like a chicken trying to keep the staff, the parents, the local authority, Ofsted, the governors on side. It was a real shock.

My official mentor was busy. She was worried about her own job, burnt out and couldn't help me much beyond telling me I'd get used to it.

Fifty hours a week. On-going low-level behaviour issues I couldn't get on top of. Constant assessments. Parents. Not enough teaching assistants. Thirty children, some with special needs, some with not enough English, all of them needing me. Real pressure. Makes the private sector look like a picnic.

After a year in the job I am a wreck. I have moments of clarity but most of the time I am simply keeping my head above water. Just. And the water keeps getting deeper as I spend more and more time trying to satisfy the demands of being a good teacher. Clubs. Board of governor reports. Internal assessments.

I want out. I certainly don't want a whole life like this. If I get out now hopefully I can start again in my first career, though the recession will make that tough. It wasn't great, but it was better than this. I had value. It was pounds and pence, but it was something. At the moment I feel like I don't exist."

You are not alone

So what can Fran do? Here are our tips for teachers on what they can do to help themselves when starting out in the profession. First, it is vital to remember that you are not alone – most new teachers find their first years challenging. Often the trouble really begins in the second year, particularly if you had a very supportive placement. So, as you prepare for September, keep the following advice in mind.

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.



of a new teacher

Know what is expected of you

Check your contract, terms and conditions and talk to your union, but make sure you are clear of what exactly is expected of you. This includes everything from breaks to planning, preparation and assessment time. This will help you manage your time and people's expectations of you.

Focus on what you can control

Write a list of all the things that are causing you stress. Divide the list into two sections: things you can control or have an impact on and things you can't. Focus on the list that you can control.

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

Prioritise and set goals

Take another look at the list of things you can control. Put the list in order of priority. What needs to be done now? What can be put back until later? This should help make things seem much more manageable.

Looking at your priority list, set yourself some realistic goals, such as: I will take two nights off during the week and have one completely free day during the weekend, so that I can spend time with my family.

Then, write these goals down. Studies show that people are more likely to reach (and surpass) their goals if they write them down.

Make sure you write them in a positive way: goals become easier to achieve when you focus on the benefits, rather than the problem.

Take care of yourself

You have a duty to your pupils, students, colleagues,

employers and most of all yourself, to look after your health and wellbeing. This means that you need to take proper breaks. This can be difficult when you have responsibilities outside the classroom, but at the very least try to find some time away from the classroom and students.

Make sure you look after your voice too. Putting the voice under continual strain can lead to long-lasting damage. Make sure you drink lots of water, rest your voice when you can and use non-verbal signs if and when appropriate.

Take care of your own work/life balance. Set practical systems to ensure that you can split your work and home life. Have separate email and social media accounts for work and home, and if you do need to bring your work home with you, try to leave it in another room, preferably with a door that you can shut. If this is not possible, hide your work away, when it is time to relax (always keep your work away from where you sleep).

Know yourself

Try to work out how you react in certain situations. Once you begin to know yourself, you can help develop new techniques in difficult or stressful situations. First, identify your stress triggers. What automatically makes you angry? Stressed? Emotional? Now think about how you usually respond to these situations.

For example: if someone asks you to do something, do you find you are tongue-tied and find it difficult to say no? If someone is rude to you, do you clam up and get emotional later?

Think of ways you might prepare yourself for those situations. If you cannot say no, can you learn some stock phrases to give in response when someone asks you to do something? – "I think this needs more time, can we talk about this later?" – or learn new techniques such as repeating the question back to them, to give yourself more time to think?

Talk to someone

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, do not be afraid to voice your concerns with trusted colleagues or friends, as they may be able to give useful advice or simply offer a sympathetic ear. If, like Fran, your mentor is too busy, who else can you speak to?

We don't have an ending to Fran's story. We know that she understands that she is not alone, and we have helped her set goals that are right for her future. We hope that she realises just what an extraordinary and rewarding career teaching is and can be. SecEd

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

How to slow your working life down

The past year has probably gone by in a blur for most NQTS as you were thrown in at the deep end of teaching. **Margaret Adams** looks at why you might consider making an effort to 'slow down' in year two

You have probably noticed. Schools are busy places. Teachers are busy people. There are always new things happening in school, things that you need to know about. You do your best to keep up. You work hard. You work long hours. You have learned to work smarter as part of your survival strategy.

However, you know that there is always more you could do. You also know that, if you try to take on too much, you will eventually reach your personal limits. That is because you are a finite resource and your capacity for work is finite, too, even if you do not like to admit it.

There are good reasons why you should avoid over-stretching and over-committing yourself on a regular basis. The most important of these reasons is that you will probably achieve more if you just slow down a bit.

Help yourself to succeed

Stop racing along with every one else, and start pacing yourself as you plan your work in school. Use the following advice to help you.

Keep focused

You enjoy getting involved with projects and new initiatives. However, if you always agree to take part in an activity when you know you have something to contribute, or when people ask you to participate, you will have problems.

You will find you have more to do that you can fit into your day. You will also run the risk of being distracted from your primary responsibilities.

Make a point of slowing down long enough to check that you are spending your time on the right things, the things your school expects you to do and the things that you are accountable for.

Give your attention to these tasks first. The rest comes later, if you can fit it in.

Have fewer goals

Even if you are paying attention to your primary responsibilities, you will find that, like most teachers, you have a long list of things to do. You will probably also find that your list has a habit of getting longer.

There is a solution. Have fewer goals. You get less done when you overload yourself. When you take on too much you find that, as well as working on the principal tasks in your schedule, you also spend a lot of your time and energy keeping other projects ticking over until you have the opportunity to give them your full attention.

You struggle with this, because you have got too much to do. This leads to missed deadlines, rescheduling, panic and crisis management and then even more time spent on fire-fighting.

Avoid this situation. Take on less. Focus your energies. Slow down.

Limit the number of goals you try to achieve this week and from September, and limit the number of projects you schedule yourself to work on. Let some things go and let some things wait. You will get more done, more quickly, if you work hard to complete one or two things well and then move on to the next important task. Therefore, take on less. Do fewer things well, in order to achieve more.

Manage stressful situations better

You meet stressful situations in school every day. You are part of your school's community, so you cannot

avoid them. What you can do, when you are faced with a stressful challenge, is to make sure you deal with it in ways that reduce and contain stress.

When the crisis occurs, or when you are faced with an emergency, slow down. Make sure you pause rather than panic. It is the pause that matters.

You pause to take stock. You pause for a deep breath and to take in the situation fully. You pause to allow yourself to think before you react. That pause will help you to avoid rushing headlong into the situation.

That is a good way of dealing with a crisis. Some people react immediately. They want to take action, to respond, to do something, and to do it quickly. Unfortunately, the fast response is sometimes the wrong response.

There are good reasons why you should avoid over-stretching and over-committing yourself on a regular basis. The most important of these reasons is that you will probably achieve more, if you just slow down a bit

If you pause, you are more likely to see the complete picture and to put what is happening around you into perspective. Slowing down here will help you to get things right quickly and to manage stressful situations better.

Find the right pace of working

That set of reports is needed today. The exam scripts must be marked by Friday. Everywhere you turn you see an approaching deadline.

Don't worry. Your job is not all about deadlines. You have a lot of control over your professional life and how you organise your work.

Recognise this. Then take steps to establish your own preferred pace of working and a rhythm for getting things done that suits you.

To do this, note how long it takes you to complete tasks when you are working at the pace that feels right for you. Find out, for example, how long it usually takes you to mark a set of essays written by your year 10 group. Work out how many hours, over the course of a term, it takes you to prepare to teach a new A level text. Take your answers into account when you are organising your personal schedule.

If other people work faster – or more slowly – than you, accept that individuals are different. Work at the pace at which you are most effective whenever you can.

Speed of working isn't the most important consideration. Finding the right pace at which to work is what matters for your overall productivity and for your job satisfaction.

Slowing down

Slowing down is difficult. The world is going its own way, at its own frenetic pace, and it wants to take you with it.

You can try to keep up. You can try to do more and do it faster, or you can learn that more haste really does mean less speed.

Be brave. Adopt a different strategy. Work at your own pace, and remember that the tortoise achieved more than the hare in their particular race. You can do the same in school, if you accept that you are taking part in a marathon, not the 100 metres sprint. SecEd

• Margaret Adams is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a former teacher. She is the author of *Work-Life Balance, A Practical Guide for Teachers* and *The 30-Day Work-Life Balance Challenge*.

Getting ready for year 2

SecEd's NQT diary is a popular column which is penned every year by a new recruit to the teaching profession. We asked last year's diarist, **Tomas Duckling**, to offer his advice on how this year's NQTS should approach their second year

Take a deep breath and enjoy the summer (if it ever arrives). You are done – you're a teacher. Best case scenario: you have a job lined up, you have passed your NQT year and you are starting to feel that after a long, gruelling year, you know what you are doing.

Some of you may feel that you are the finished article. Well, I am afraid to be the one to break it to you. You are not. I was quite cocky when I finished my NQT year, I assumed I had gone through my training and now it was just about adding some new strings to my bow. Little did I know that year two would be infinitely tougher than year one. I feel a trend coming on. My advice may not apply to all of you, but here are 10 things to watch out for in your first "proper" year...

Mistakes

As an NQT you are given a lot of room for error when it comes to filling in the wrong documents, misreading exam specifications, following the wrong procedure. However, you are will soon be a qualified professional and expected to act as such. The important change is that if this year you made a kid sit in the corner and wear a dunce's hat, it would have been treated as a rookie error – next year it will get a more serious response.

Workload

This is what I have found to be the hardest part of being a teacher. My friends in other professions have deadlines, but they also get given time to go away and make sure that the project they are working on ends up perfect, regardless of how long it takes.

Next year you will be tempted to get involved in sports clubs, schools productions, extra-curricular

activities and the like. In many ways the most important word you learn may be "no". Taking on too much doesn't mean you get more time in which to do it – the opposite in fact. The extra stuff I do makes my week more fun, but it also means I do a lot of things to half of my best ability. Be careful what you sign up for.

The perils of promotion

Some of you will have no interest in your next step, some of you will have your career charted out down to last detail.

You have spent the last year perfecting your teaching and getting to grips with school life, but it is very possible that in the next year a job may come up and you may be interested, or encouraged, to go for it.

I personally find the most depressing irony of teaching is that the better you are at it, eventually, the less you do of it. Every rung up the career ladder will reduce the time you spend doing what you got into this job for. Be careful what you wish for.

Exam classes

Pressure is a powerful driving force, and the demands of a class who need you to help them produce the result that will get them into university, and therein open the gateway to the next part of their life, can rest heavy on your shoulders. Nobody expects an NQT to hammer out amazing results but you can't use naivety as an excuse any more. If you take an exam class, or several, you will be expected to produce the goods. Consequently, you will need to work harder.

Don't forget the little guys

The biggest mistake I would say I made during my early teaching career, as is shown by the point above, is that I have invested a huge amount of my time in my exam classes, and sadly this has often been to the detriment of my lower years.

Theirs is the first marking pile to be pushed back, theirs is the lesson that, if I have five to plan for one day, will get the least time. Bizarrely, however, the better you teach them when they are young, the easier it becomes when they get older!

Proper relationships

One of the key Teachers' Standards refers to "building relationships with students" and you are supposed to be able to show this in one hour of your teaching.

This is, of course, complete rubbish. In your training years you are creating superficial relationships, you are showing off, pretending. After the end of the next year you will find that you start to really connect with students and consequently you will develop meaningful and genuine relationships – essentially you start to really care.

Colleagues become friends

Simple one this, next September you will start a job properly. It is highly likely, as you will be spending the majority of your time with those people, the faces in the staffroom may end up being best man, best friend or even wife/husband. It happens, so be nice.



Don't stop learning

Life-long learner is one of those horrible teaching buzzwords but annoyingly it does make sense. If you think you are perfect now you haven't got a hope. Every day in this job makes you a better teacher.

Organise

My boss will tell you that, when I first turned up, I planned my lessons on the back of a fag packet, didn't keep a diary and thought that every lesson could be controlled with a funny story and a bad French impression. Now, remarkably, my lessons are detailed and thoughtful, my termly planning sheets are colour-coded and I try and make lessons less about me and more about them. I am getting better.

Have a life

After two full years in the classroom, I feel like I am

a half-decent teacher. I could be a lot better, I could easily be a lot worse. I feel very fortunate to do a job I love, especially when I talk to friends who dread crawling into work on a Monday morning. Regardless of the hours I put in, the late nights, piles of marking and constant battles teaching is a great job.

However, make sure you have a life outside of the school. I genuinely think this is important as kids want teachers who understand the outside world. It also stops you from becoming bitter.

More than anything, enjoy it. The last year for me has been amazing, I feel confident in what I do and I can tell the students come in and, mostly, enjoy my lessons. If I didn't enjoy it, I doubt they would. **SecEd**

• *Tomas Duckling is a second year history teacher at Queens' School in Hertfordshire and was SecEd's NQT diarist in the 2011/12 school year.*

SecEd's current NQT diarist reflects on her first year at the chalkface and offers advice to trainee teachers who are preparing to begin their careers in September

My year as an NQT is nearly over. I cannot believe it has gone so fast. I have been asked to reflect on lessons learnt, how I am preparing for the year ahead, and key successes.

Perhaps it is because as trainee teachers we are taught to continually reflect upon and improve our practice, but I find the first two much easier to do than the third.

So these are the things I am going to write about here, in the hope that a look at my lessons learned and how I plan to prepare for my next year might be of some small help to any trainee teachers about to embark on their own NQT journey.

Behaviour

It seems appropriate, given that this is the thing most PGCE students cite as their main worry, to begin with my key learning points (in no particular order) for behaviour management...

From trainee to an NQT...

- Consistency is key; find a system and follow it religiously for all pupils. They may not like your rules but they will respect you for being fair.
- Kill them with kindness. Make sure that whatever issue you have had with a pupil you are always friendly and polite when you next see them, whether that be walking down a corridor or in the next lesson.
- Pick up on the little things and the big things will look after themselves. Be picky over small things from the word go and they will know there is little room for deviation. Once pupils know you have high expectations they will find it easier to stick within the boundaries.
- Never make it personal. Always refer back to school or department policy so that pupils' negative feelings are deflected from being directed at you (probably the single most important piece of advice for behaviour management).
- Build relationships – developing positive relationships with your class is invaluable. This does not mean trying to be "down with the kids"; they will see through this within an instant. Rather it is about building mutual respect. It is about being fair, consistent and always having a positive attitude towards them. If a pupil thinks that you do not like them as a person then it is game over.

CPD

My next set of learning points relate to keeping up your professional development. You will have less formal

training this year and it is important you continue to grow as practitioner and don't stagnate...

- Take risks. Refresh your practice by trying different lesson structures and activities. What works for one class won't work for another and it is important you experiment to get the best out of each class. Of course some of the things you try will be complete disasters, but failure is all part of the learning process.
- Keep reading. I find I have gained so much this year from reading around pedagogy and educational literature.
- Keep observing. Just because you are out of your PGCE year does not mean you have seen all the good practice there is to see. You can learn so much from your colleagues. They are a free CPD resource, so use them.

Staying sane

My final section of learning points focuses on how to stay sane in what is probably one of the most emotionally draining professions there is...

- Eat and sleep well (when you can). You will be surprised how the increase in timetabled teaching hours takes its toll on your energy levels.
- Talk to your colleagues. No man is an island and people generally want to help you out where they can. You will be surprised to learn that seemingly rock-like figures suffered similar troubles to yourself in their first year.
- Do things outside of school. Due to the emotional,

physical and mental investment required to do this job well it can be easy to lose a sense of yourself. I have learnt the importance of setting even a small amount of time aside each week to do things that I enjoy that are completely unrelated to the job. Whether your thing is cycling, skydiving or knitting, make sure you keep doing it.

- Finally, just enjoy it! Many times I have found myself feeling down about a problem with a hard-to-reach pupil or a difficult class. What I have learnt is to focus on the positives; this is an amazing job, it is fun, rewarding and challenging all at once, and never, ever boring!

Conclusion

So, how do I feel about the next academic year? What am I doing to prepare? To be completely honest, there are many tweaks I plan to make to my practice, from developing my record-keeping system to designing a whole new scheme of work for my A2 psychology class.

The most important thing that I plan to do in terms of preparation, however (which I would recommend as vital for anyone about to start their NQT year in September), is make the most of the six-week rest. We deserve it! **SecEd**

• *SecEd's NQT diarist for 2012/13 is a teacher of maths at a south London secondary school. You can read her regular diary on page 8, or online at www.sec-ed.co.uk/blog-search/author/95*

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