

Mentoring scenarios

Here you will find some mentoring scenarios. Experienced mentors have suggested ways they would approach the problems posed to them.

Scenario 1 - The trainee who loses their nerve

It is three weeks into the first placement. The trainee has been progressing well to this point and showing lots of potential. She has taught a sequence of four lessons. The first went very well. The second did not go so well, but the trainee was clearly able to identify the problems. In lesson three, there was clear evidence of her having acted on the feedback. Lesson four was fine, although there was a mistake in topic explanation. The trainee is struggling to plan lesson five. It is taking her much longer to get any details on paper. It is not a lesson that should pose any difficulties in itself.

As this is early in placement one, it is likely that most trainees will benefit from a more directive approach. Think about statements that begin:

- You need to...
- I think you should...
- You must...
- You have to...
- I want you to...

Mentors would try the following approaches:

- Try to boost the trainee's confidence in discussion by focusing on strengths and what is going well.
- Take them back to basics. Remove excess targets and adopt a 'let's get this one thing really solid' approach.
- Tease out what is the root problem (knowledge? skill? perfectionism? tiredness?)
- Team-plan with the trainee
- Team-teach with the trainee
- Take the wider view about the trainee. Check in with the university team and others. Is anything personal going on for this trainee that is affecting progress?
- Recommend specific observations of the end of sequences.

Scenario 2 - The trainee who is overwhelmed

It is the first week of the second block of the first placement. The trainee had a successful first term. He taught 8 full lessons in the first block and successfully submitted his assignment one. He does take a long time to plan lessons and has commented quite frequently about the amount of admin involved in the course. His timetable has now increased to 8 lessons a week. Yesterday he skipped an A Level lesson observation. You find him staring at the computer, having failed to get anything done in a two hour planning slot.

As this is further into placement one you may be moving to a less directive approach. This could be helped by trying to use sentence starters such as:

- Have you tried...
- Could you perhaps...
- What about trying...

Mentors would try the following approaches:

- Sit with the trainee and plan the lesson – modelling the speed of planning and the stages to go through.
- Break the timetable down into bite-size parts – in the same way as one might help a student plan a revision timetable
- Remind them to lean on the departmental resources and scheme of work and tell them not to plan everything from scratch.
- Take the wider view about the trainee. Check in with the university team and others. Is anything personal going on for this trainee that is affecting progress?

Scenario 3 - The trainee who is finding it hard to be a colleague

It is the second week of placement two. You have been approached by two colleagues in the department who are unhappy with the new trainee. One of them is complaining that she e-mailed a lesson plan late in the evening asking for help for the next day. Another, is complaining about the trainee eating the departmental biscuits. As you arrived at school this morning, one of the office staff told you that the trainee stopped someone else's photocopying to put their own through.

Ideally by placement 2 the trainee is able to be coached to find the solution.

Sentence starters that can help with this include:

- Describe what happened/what might happen...
- Explain why you think this happened.
- Tell me what the consequence was.
- Describe what you can take forward.
- What else...?
- What would you do if...?

Mentors would try the following approaches:

- Go in quite firmly as it was placement 2 and this sort of behaviour should have been learnt in placement 1.
- Unpick the cause, as there is a welfare issue of working late into the evening
- Check the culture change from the placement 1 school that the trainee has had to negotiate. Firmly put the boundaries of professional practice, as interpreted at your school, in place.
- Get in touch with previous mentors and university tutors to find out any background information
- Send a standard mail to all the department reminding them about the biscuit rota.