Establishing Myself in the School Community

I have just completed my first eight weeks at my new school, Norton College. The school is an academy and has an excellent Humanities department of which I am now an active part. I feel fully supported by the staff and have already been invested in by being allowed to attend further training with more experienced staff from other schools.

Due to my excellent local connections and knowledge, I have been heavily involved in organising a successful Year 7 Humanities trip in the local community. This trip has had a strengthening effect on perception of the school in the community and enabled Norton College to forge positive working relationships with local businesses.

I teach both History and Philosophy & Ethics (which has replaced Religious Studies) and I am thoroughly enjoying the challenge each day brings.

I also run a lunchtime History club and we are currently creating a scripted drama on WW2 which will be filmed! In addition I am a Year 10 Mentor and am working on the delivery of PSHCE in the school.

I love working at the school and in my local community and I have already had very positive feedback from staff, students and parents on the impact I am having. I have certainly benefitted from the high quality training I received at York and I hope to continue to improve as a teacher for the foreseeable future.

James Wigby
History (Red Kite) NQT
Norton College

Supporting EAL Pupils

During the PGCE I attended several sessions on working with and supporting EAL students, however in my school placements I did not come across many EAL pupils, and of those who were, they were already very competent with the English language, and needed very little extra support. However, the advice, links to useful resources and the information given during the PGCE sessions has been invaluable in my first term as an NQT. I now teach two pupils who have very little knowledge of the language, after having arrived in England very recently, and several other pupils who are developing their confidence in English.

To help these pupils who struggle to understand, I have used several strategies, influenced by the ideas and suggestions given during the WSI sessions at university. I have:

• Made flashcards with, for example, English-Polish instructions on, so that pupils know what they should be doing, and can learn key phrases that will be used throughout school
• Provided copies of PowerPoint presentations and keywords that will be used in the topic/lesson.
• Provided the students with extra examples – luckily maths is a “universal language”, so they are often able to understand the processes from examples. This
means that it is a subject that they are able to make progress in straight away, which really boosts their confidence.

- When I mark their books, I write some phrases in their home language – this means that both they and their parents can see how well they are doing, and again helps them to feel settled and valued.

Although the PGCE sessions were not always immediately relevant to me when I attended them, I’m really glad that I explored all of the given resources at the time, and reflected on the suitability of all of them towards my subject.

Leanne Scarborough
Maths NQT
Archbishop Holgate’s School

**Behaviour and the Bard**

Admittedly, I have a minimal social life; I am regularly sleep deprived; excitement is when I realise I’ve marked more than half of a class set of books; I get angry when my non-English teacher friends fail to see the comical value when a Year 10 pupil writes about Lennie’s Wife in their controlled assessment on *Of Mice and Men*. Despite this, I know I am in the right job.

As with most teachers, I have an array of classes: challenging classes to weaker classes to the highflyers, but the PGCE has truly enabled me and given me the assurance that I could, at least attempt to, tackle them all. My most challenging group currently is an all-boys, bottom set Year 11 class. Reading that the next unit I was required teach them was Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, I was far from confident. However, Catherine Shawyer had spent a number of university sessions teaching us how to make Shakespeare accessible to classes such as this. Catherine demonstrated that bringing Shakespeare into the modern day and making it relevant to pupils was a way of engaging them into the otherwise overwhelming texts.

Taking this advice on board, my Year 11s read a child-friendly, modernised version of the play in order to grasp the plot, but it seemed that the pupils were struggling with understanding the characters and their relationships with each other. As a result, and in true Catherine Shawyer style, I turned to drama.

I asked the class to work in two groups and allocated character roles to each pupil. The pupils had to work with their group to perform one of the scenes from the play. In order to execute this successfully, the boys were encouraged to think about how the characters felt and acted with each other, and how they felt and reacted to certain events. Not only did this activity require them to learn and develop their understanding of the characters and their relationships, but it meant they had to understand the plot, synthesise it and then re-produce it.

The results were brilliant - the pupils seemed to really enjoy it and get stuck in (VOLUNTARILY coming back at lunch times to practice!), and regardless of initial moans, they were learning dreaded Shakespeare.

Rachel Heys
English NQT
St Wilfrid’s Academy, Blackburn

**Teaching History Post-16**

During my short time as an NQT I have really enjoyed teaching AS Level students. I was really nervous at first because I am not that much older than some of the pupils I am teaching. However, you soon realise the aura you have in the classroom and how much pupils look up to you as a ‘history guru’. I feel the level of intellectual conversation you can have really helps me to understand that young historians are fascinated by the past as much as I am and that I can actually join in the conversations as a learner and develop my own knowledge and ideas from the students.

I feel that the experience I gained teaching and assisting in A Level lessons during my placements at the University of York prepared me for my own lessons in terms of the tone of the lessons and the pitch. I also saw engaging ways of teaching post 16 through curriculum area sessions and placements that again I have been able to use in my own practice.

Connor Berry
History (Red Kite) NQT
Horsforth School, Leeds

**Sparking Motivation Through ‘Thought Bombs’**

This term I have been given a lovely but very low-ability Year 7 group who have come into the school on very low National Curriculum levels - several have yet to reach Level 3. Some of this class are disengaged because they find it incredibly difficult to understand and implement what they have been taught. They need lessons which offer short, snappy tasks and often have to mix verbal and written work as longer written tasks cause them to lose focus.

I decided to use ‘Thought Bombs’ to recap the persuasive techniques we had studied so far - a technique which was introduced to me on my PGCE. These are hollow balls which can contain inflammatory statements to spark student discussion or quotations from texts for analysis, amongst other possibilities.
I used thought bombs with this class to give pupils examples of facts, opinions, alliteration and similes. Each student caught a ball with an example; the examples were differentiated according to the colour of the ‘bomb’ although the students did not know this.

This task could have been done using a worksheet or examples from the board, however, using this strategy got pupils engaged and focused because it was new and different. Simply because they were motivated, the students seemed to grasp the techniques more clearly.

This experience taught me that spending a few more minutes making a task engaging actually saves you time in the long run by ensuring pupils learn it thoroughly first time round.

Amy Jepson  
English NQT  
The Priory Ruskin Academy, Lincolnshire

Consistency is Key

Whilst studying on the PGCE Mathematics course at York University, curriculum area sessions looked also at teaching different mathematical topics with a focus on promoting positive pupil behaviour. I have carried the techniques given in these sessions over into my NQT year and use them every day in my classroom. I have been able to develop my own plans and resources in my NQT year to ensure students are making maximum progress. University sessions taught us to think about the misconceptions that students may have with certain topics and suggested methods of teaching tricky topics to ensure students understand the most important concepts.

My top tip to future mathematics trainees is to be consistent. Do not try to be the student’s friend. All students enjoy consistent teaching and I feel it is essential to always follow your school’s discipline policy.

The PGCE course at University of York, prepared me to be consistent and when standing in front of my first class in September, aside from feeling a little nervous, I was confident I could be consistent with my students and get to know them each as individuals.

The PGCE is hard work but with the consistent help and support which is always available from Paula and the team I thoroughly enjoyed myself and feel I could not have had a more pleasant route into my teaching career.

Samantha Roberts  
Maths NQT  
Horsforth School, Leeds

Positive Relationships & Prezis

At my school, the entire History department was new to the school as well. In these somewhat unusual circumstances, I have been allocated a Year 11 class. At an all-girls grammar school this could be considered being thrown in at the deep end!

One of the main challenges has been developing professional relationships with pupils used to a teacher very different to me. Over the first term, I have begun to establish positive, purposeful relationships and have used the preparation for controlled assessment (Russia 1905-41) to enhance the pupils’ confidence. In particular, I am pleased with the engagement with a self-study Prezi used over half term so pupils could identify and rectify issues with their understanding. Although, in fairness, I did steal this resource idea from Paula Mountford! Being mid-GCSE, this class will always provide challenges during my NQT. However, I feel that the groundwork laid this term has already made a significant impact.

By reflecting on my own teaching so that I improve further, a skill enhanced during my PGCE, I know I’m heading in the right direction.

Rob Hempsall  
History NQT  
Spalding High School, Lincolnshire

Promoting Effective Classroom Dialogue

Last year, during English sessions, we experimented with a number of techniques to improve the effectiveness of classroom discussion. These included a dialogic discussion technique which encourages dialogue between the whole class, rather than the teacher asking questions and pupils answering. A series of Ts and Ss are written on the board, and a question or topic for discussion is posed. The teacher will only speak when a T is the next in the sequence and when there is an S, a student must talk. Students do not raise hands but use eye contact to determine the order, and they pose their own questions, develop and challenge each other’s opinions to explore the question.

I used this technique in my lessons as a trainee teacher and raved about it to others in the English cohort. I have now gone on to use it as an NQT and am constantly surprised by how effective it is. The ideas that children come up with when they are free to question and challenge each other are far more profound and provocative than if they are led by the questions set by a teacher. That said, the ability to dictate when the conversation allows the modelling of good practice and the chance to re-
**Teaching History Post-16**

After four years in York, I am back where I started – St Leonard’s School in Durham. I took the decision to apply for a job at my old school and got it. Being called ‘sir’ and calling my old teachers by their first names has been a surprisingly easy transition.

Primarily teaching History, I have classes from Years 7 to 10. I am also teaching AS Government and Politics which is brilliant, with a streamlined class of just nine students. I was fortunate enough to observe and be involved in A Level Politics lessons on my mini-block placement at Harrogate Grammar. This was valuable as the content and assessment criteria differ from History and so the previous experience helped me in my first half term.

I was placed at Manor CE Academy on my main block placement. The experience of teaching at a faith school was useful prior to starting my job at St Leonard’s – despite obviously being a product of one myself. Both schools place an emphasis on the teacher’s role as a form tutor – a role which could easily be overlooked. My Year 7 form are still enjoying the novelty of my ‘Funky Tie Friday’, although I’m sure it won’t last until Year 11.

**Darren Smith**  
History NQT  
St Leonard’s School, Durham

**From A’ Level Trainee Teacher to A’ Level NQT – My Transition**

One the greatest challenges for an NQT is A’ Level. This year I have both a Year 12 and 13 class – studying topics which are not my degree specialism, and working in a small department I am the only teacher of that side of the course. Before the year started I was daunted by the prospect of preparing students for such important exams. My training at York however, left me fully equipped to tackle this challenge. From the outset as trainees we were encouraged to develop our A’ Level CPD alongside the other elements of training. Preparing A’ Level day at the beginning of last year started me thinking about the transition for pupils from GCSE to A’ Level. On A’ Level Day I delivered a session about essay writing, including the key elements of an A’ Level essay compared to GCSE expectations, and demonstrated how to structure and plan. I now work at one of the schools which attended A’ Level day, and currently teach the Year 13s who attended the session at York University. I was touched to see that from their first lesson with me this September the sheets I gave them at this session were firmly hole-punched into their folders. We regularly refer to this and the other resources from York University, and this initial lesson reminded me of the fantastic preparation I received from the York PGCE.

**Marie Whiles**  
History NQT  
Boroughbridge High School

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**From Strength to Strength**

It is November already! Words cannot describe how quickly these past few months have flown by! To say my NQT year has been hectic, is quite the understatement! During my PGCE placements I experienced middle-ability sets and mixed-ability groups, so I felt somewhat unprepared for the prospect of teaching French to two KS3 bottom sets. Both classes had done very little French prior to me teaching them, so I have had to start from scratch and it has been a lot of work. I have much time preparing kinaesthetic activities to engage pupils in French – card sorts, for example which was something introduced to me on the PGCE, are the current bane of my life! However, this week my pupils have all managed to produce an accurate piece of written work about themselves. I have managed to get students who could barely remember what ‘Bonjour’ meant to write four lines in French about themselves. Me. Mr NQT. I am in shock, but I am so very, very proud. (So proud in fact, I had to run next door and show my HoD what they had managed to produce!) Indeed, I am so proud, I am going now to perform one of the perks of my job: a positive phone call home.

**Martin Heeley**  
MFL NQT  
Filey School

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**PGCE Partnership Newsletter**

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