Welcome to the PGCE Partnership Newsletter:

This edition of the newsletter captures the voices and experiences of our 2015-16 trainees from across our different subject areas and training pathways. Each trainee has chosen to write about a particular highlight of their Initial Teacher Training year, thereby giving readers a flavour of how our course is a personalised training experience, supporting and challenging trainees as they forge their own professional identities.

Continuing the grand tradition of York trainees, this cohort has made an amazing contribution to schools and other educational settings this year, and simultaneously reaped the professional benefits themselves. We hope you enjoy reading about and sharing some of their work, their creativity and their insights. We thank all colleagues who have contributed over this year to training this cohort of wonderful new teachers.

My PGCE Year

When I applied to the course in early 2015, I felt pretty confident that I wanted to be a teacher. I was less sure that I wanted to complete another university course. Starting my PGCE at the (not so?) grand age of 28, this would be my third institution, tenth year at university and twenty-fourth year in full-time education. And what would it be like? It was a long time since I had started studying a new subject, but with this one, I would be expected to teach it too...

Looking back at the end of the PGCE year, I can see how the path I have travelled as part of this wonderful cohort, with terrific colleagues and inspiring mentors, gradually erased my concerns. Yes, it was tiring, stressful and frustrating at times, but it was also exciting, challenging and fun. Any trepidation I had back in September faded as we all grew in confidence with the support and guidance of our mentors and tutors. As a result of my year at the University of York, I now feel prepared to spend a further 24 years (and the rest!) in education, leading the way by following the example I have been set.

Emma Chapman
History

Board pens and bedtime stories

When I told teacher friends that I was leaving my career in tourism and retraining as a teacher, months after having a baby, I was underwhelmed by their enthusiasm. They found it hard to believe I was abandoning a life of travel, expense accounts and “flexible” workloads and I got the impression that I might be moving against a tide of dissatisfied, departing teachers.

I had considered teaching before; I once even completed the application forms. But it had never felt right: some of the most inspirational teachers I had known had shared both their subject knowledge and their life experience. And, selfishly, I wasn’t finished having fun. But after becoming a mother I underwent the clichéd reassessment of my priorities and had an increasing sense of wanting to do something more important. I took a deep breath and filled in the forms...

I cannot say it has been an easy year: rather a juggling act, with sacrifices, hard work and sleepless nights (although I may have had those anyway).

Several times I thought longingly of the leisurely pace of my old job, but I know now that the journey and the risk were worth it. And I don’t think I ever expected to find that standing in front of 30 teenagers was exactly where I was meant to be.

Heather Jones
Modern Foreign Languages

“Why do I need to do a primary placement, if I want to be a secondary teacher?”

I will always remember my primary placement at the very start of the PGCE course...

Before I started, I felt apprehensive, and thought I would just work through the days and get it over with. The reality was I loved it!

Working with the same group of students, all day every day, creates some really close bonds that are hard to leave behind. I spent my week working closely with one student from a troubled background, and this student’s story really affected me and impacted upon my secondary practice.

I think it’s really important to factor in an understanding of a student’s background and remember that although I only see my students for two hours a week, I may not know...
what's going on with every single one of my students every day. They still have a whole life outside of my classroom and I need to keep that in mind when they walk in.

Sometimes the consistency of you as their teacher, standing at the front of that room smiling is the only stable relationship the students have. Sometimes they throw their frustrations at you, and sometimes they act up.

Walk into every lesson with a clean slate for all students, and if a student upsets you one day, forget it the next!'

Sally Hesketh
History

**Use silence to silence**

Sliding carefully through the door of the classroom, I watched thoughtfully. Students buzzing as they dropped bags from great heights onto the floor, covered in that fire-retardant lino that so many schools seemed to appropriate during redecorations in the early 90s. I stood awkwardly at the back of the classroom, no chair being spare. As I watched, the man who would eventually raise my confidence in my teaching ability more than anyone else, walked purposefully to the front of the room, stopped and folded his arms. 30 kids still buzzing from “that mint tackle Joey made on Alex” in their PE lesson 10 minutes before slowly looked around, one by one they sat down and were rendered silent, by silence.

This one moment stuck in my head, not just because I was thoroughly impressed but because this moment scared me more than anything else since I had embarked on the PGCE course. I had sat in classrooms for a year previously, this classroom actually, working as a Teaching Assistant with SEND students. I had seen this teacher employ this tactic a hundred times before, but right then, at that moment I realised that I would have to do that and I honestly thought I never could.

Fast forward 7 months: 1 full placement; 3 teaching reviews; 2 assignments; about 60 lessons taught; countless successes and a few failures. I sat at the front of a different classroom, fighting with a particularly reluctant projector cable as 30 students bounced in, dropping bags onto the floor. I looked up from my computer, having finally managed to wrestle my PowerPoint onto the screen, and without a second thought I stood up. I walked to the centre of the room and folded my arms. Silence descended.

I started the PGCE course observing so many fantastic teachers, watching as they accomplished the amazing as if it was nothing. There have been so many things that I never thought that I could do, and it’s not until now that I look back and realise, that I can and I have. Now, I can silence a class with silence too.

Betony Camm
English

**Remind me: How Important is that Primary Placement at the Start of the Secondary PGCE Course?**

Kids hate maths!” It’s a statement we hear so often that it’s tempting just to accept it without question. How about instead saying “Kids love maths”? That was certainly the conclusion I came to after spending a week at Fishergate Primary School to observe their teaching and learning of maths.

Throughout my short time on primary placement there I repeatedly spoke to pupils who were ultra keen to show off to me what maths they knew and what maths they could do. From the girls in the reception class proudly demonstrating how they could use Numicon blocks to aid with their counting, to the Year 1/2 pupils volunteering to do their times tables (the 11 times table was particularly popular), to the Year 3/4 pupils working with clocks and the Year 5/6 pupils doing fantastic things with fractions.

It did help that the school was obviously very keen to find the right level of support and challenge for each pupil and was very proactively preparing pupils for the new KS3/4 syllabuses, however this experience set the scene for my ITT year, reminding me that maths lessons should always be about awakening and feeding excitement for the subject rather than fighting resistance to it.

Simon Rogerson
Mathematics

**The Business of Drama**

For Professional Enrichment, I worked with a fellow Drama trainee and a Business Studies trainee. As a group we were extremely interested in designing a cross-curricular project that would allow us to gain further experience with Post-16 students.

After discussing which subjects often have cross-curricular links, we found that Drama and Business are rarely used to enhance each other.

Having arrived at this conclusion, we decided to work with a group of sixth form students who are taking their piece of devised drama focusing upon Homelessness to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August.

We designed workshops that would allow students to complete business tasks such as planning the marketing
at The Fringe, hunting for travel deals, finding public liability insurance and creating links with Homelessness charities. Alongside the administration tasks, we designed Drama workshops that would allow students to develop a piece of drama that would be unique and successful at the Fringe.

Through working on this project we discovered how Drama and Business Studies can be mutually beneficial. Students were provided with an opportunity to understand how a Theatre company runs as a whole and they were far more prepared for their upcoming venture!

In our future careers, we all aim to work alongside other departments in our schools to ensure that students are provided with a cohesive curriculum that will enhance their overall learning!

Francesca Verity
Drama

Science Go Rock-Pooling!

After such a challenging, ‘am I even going to make it?!’, coffee fuelled year, a fun day out (with some Science thrown in) was exactly what the Science cohort needed.

Starting out bright and early by Whitby Abbey, our lovely tutors gave us a treasure hunt quiz to familiarise ourselves with the little seaside town. We ran up and down 199 steps, observed the weathering on gravestones (Science) and completed crazy cryptic puzzles.

After meeting at the place where ‘smoothers hang out’ (Sander’s Yard), we were given a long lunch break that consisted of fish and chips on the pier, a game of “catch” on the beach and mini golf in the arcade – beautiful.

In the afternoon we travelled to Boggle hole clad in shorts, wellies and flip flops. We trudged through wet sand, dry seaweed (ouch!) and rock pools to look at organisms in their ‘undisturbed’ habitats. We carried out line transects and used picture keys to identify different organisms such as the ‘edible winkle’, ‘bladder wrack weed’ and my favourite the ‘common shore crab’.

A fellow trainee was nicknamed ‘the crab whistle’ due to his ability to spot all the little crabs hiding under the rocks, whilst I mainly concentrated on not falling head first into the rock pool.

Coffee and cake at the hostel nearby rounded the day off perfectly, and we all made it home exhausted from such a great day.

It was the best end to an unforgettable year and even though most of us came back sunburnt and sandy, it was an awesome way to celebrate surviving our PGCE (as well as learning about fieldwork!)

Sara Suleman
Biology

The Importance of Differentiation

During my ITT year the varying needs of pupils quickly became apparent to me. As a result of my training, I now sort differentiation systematically.

Firstly, when planning lessons, I create a section dedicated to individual pupils who may benefit from additional support. When teaching mixed ability classes, with pupils whose literacy levels are varied, I re-write information or source sheets specifically for individual pupils. I condense some information massively and highlight key points or present them as bullet points. I also create writing frames and sentence starters.

Initially, teaching low or very mixed ability classes can be slightly daunting, however when you witness pupils’ gratitude and progress it becomes a delight. In one of my Y7 classes I taught a young boy whose literacy was weak, thus history was very challenging for him. He began my lessons refusing to complete any work.

Once I began to create resources for him, create structures and frames, which supported him through his work, his confidence soared. It was so clear how much pride he was taking in his work and how much more he enjoyed school. He even started to bring me cake! Seeing how much impact differentiation can have was so rewarding and definitely worth the work.

Ashleigh Kincell
History

A Fresh Approach to Mechanics

“A brick is dropped from a height of three hundred metres; at what speed would it hit the ground?”

Interested? No, nor am I - but this is exactly how mechanics is usually taught at A-level.

If instead you take the question “Would a brick falling from the top of the Eiffel Tower kill you?” you have the same mechanics, but a wholly different approach. During my Professional Enrichment weeks I spent time creating a display looking at how to bring mechanics to life in the A-level classroom. One section of this display used bathroom scales to demonstrate
forces and weight. “Does the weight change if you stand on one leg?” and other such questions are great for unlocking forces.

The Color Purple and Top Girls. This was a great opportunity to deepen our knowledge of exactly what is expected of pupils in the exam, and how we, as teachers, can support them.

The resources we created developed pupils’ contextual understanding and throughout the process we considered how to encourage and support students’ independent exploration and learning: key skills for successful A’ Level study.

A focus of our work on Top Girls was exploring the use of drama strategies in an A’ Level English setting. The play relies on complex overlapping of speech to give it a sense of realism, and this is difficult to appreciate through reading alone. We explored the potential of improvisation, rehearsed readings and using sections of an audio recording of the play to allow students to comprehend better the dramatic impact of the play. To develop appreciation of characters and relationships between characters we also developed hot-seating and improvisation resources.

Overall we had a great time, learned a lot from it and hope the students go on to benefit from the resources we produced.

Kathryn Harding & Taryn Mackay
English

Enriching My EAL Training

With school based placements over and our final assignment handed in, my fellow trainees and I were given the opportunity to undertake a programme of personal enrichment of our choice. The area which I chose to focus on to help me in my career was working with EAL pupils.

One thing that was emphasised to me on arrival and throughout my two weeks spent on placement was that EAL pupils are not SEND and should not be treated as such (though there were obviously some exceptions). Teachers at the school are advised to include EAL children in all activities and place them with fluent, native English speakers to speed up their learning of the language by providing them with strong oral models.

Observing an excellent team, I saw how children arriving at the school were assessed in order to let teachers know what level of comprehension pupils were at. Sitting in on sessions and chatting to colleagues I was able to gain an understanding of just how far some of the children had come in terms of their English language proficiency.

Although this experience was undertaken in a primary school, what I was able to take from this experience is transferable for the job I hope to secure in a secondary school.

Richard Coombs
History

A Week in “Waitrose”

You may be familiar with the website and popular Facebook page “Overheard in Waitrose” which collects quotes, overheard and submitted by members of the public, that capture the (organic Madagascan vanilla) essence of its namesake; personal favourites include “Get a few more tubs of the duck and orange pâté, Arabella is anaemic and needs the iron” and “Put the papaya DOWN Horatio!”.

I was fortunate enough to spend my second week of Professional Enrichment at York’s Steiner School and throughout my stay I kept finding myself thinking that the only real word to describe it was... ... Waitrose.
Steiner education is an alternative, holistic approach wherein the children learn through ‘play’ in the younger years and a more observational, inquisitive approach as they progress through the system. While fee paying, the fee is a percentage of one’s earnings and so the school’s body is made up not of an exclusive economic band (as most private schools are) but more of a way of thinking band – as one teacher said to me, parents who send their children there are ones who “make a conscious decision to think about where their kids go to school and the style of teaching they get – they are actively seeking something different”. A small school, class groups stay together right the way through, York Steiner goes to age 14 in much the way primary schools do and the students here seem vastly more confident and outgoing than their peers in state schools. During my time at the school, I witnessed a lot to make me realise just how different this approach was.

Things ‘Overheard in Steiner’ include a seven-year-old declining cake brought in for a birthday on the grounds of it not being vegan. However, what really sold Steiner to me as being more than a school and rather a way of life, was when I visited the onsite shop and saw to my delight in a school 40 miles from the sea a handmade natural willow lobster pot for sale for £80. With inspiration to study languages. They were stalls with themes of tribal dancing (Yoruba), Latin place names in British, the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (Portuguese) and a Football Language Extraordinaire meaning that the pupils were able to have fun while involving themselves in languages that were new and unknown to them.

After the long slog that has been the PGCE course, the day in Selby was a great opportunity for trainees to engage in something a little more fun and interactive than assignment writing, lesson planning and evaluating while spending time with fellow trainees, pupils and staff in an event that was a celebration of our subject and the human need to communicate!

Peter Baird
Modern Foreign Languages

The lesson of which I am most proud

In the early stages of my training I was given a history nurture group which consisted predominantly of SEND students. At first this was daunting.

I had observed the host teacher for several weeks and was amazed at just how brilliant she was with them; I doubted my ability to teach them.
I chose to spend the first week of my Enrichment at Applefields School in York, to gain further insight into the needs and requirements of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Applefields School is a community, co-educational, day special school for secondary aged children with a wide range of special educational needs.

I spent my time with a class of seven students, all of different ages, with severe and profound learning difficulties. The learning in this class centred on promoting communication, through a variety of mediums including Makaton sign language and technological communication devices.

This experience highlighted the important role patience, persistence and kindness has in generating progress. Solidifying that, as teachers we must be conscious of the well-being of our students, we must know them, know their needs and adapt to them accordingly.

The PGCE Year: A Turning Point in My Life

The journey through the PGCE year has been an important, unforgettable experience. While I was working as an English teacher in Spain, I found out, almost by chance, about the extraordinary opportunity to train as a MFL in the UK. I started the application process immediately.

Although it was difficult at times, having two little children and living abroad which made travelling for interviews a challenge, describing my prior teaching experience, doing the professional skills tests and equivalency test, I was supported by University of York staff from day one.

in the same way. However, when observing in each lesson I tried to build up relationships with the students through working closely with individuals so that when I took over the class the pupils felt more comfortable, as change was less of an issue. I began teaching the Holocaust to the class, a topic which is difficult for most people to understand.

My lesson on Kristallnacht will always be a lesson of which I feel most proud. Although most of my class could not produce a level 7 written paragraph on the event, every single student could tell me what the word meant and what had happened whether it was through actions or words. For me that was one of the most rewarding experiences of my PGCE year. Enabling students to progress in some way, big or small, shows that teachers have such a vital role to play.

This was an opportunity for students to choose an area of interest (within the world of learning and teaching) and arrange an experience around this area that would further their professional knowledge and understanding.

Student Centred Learning

The PGCE I have recently completed with the University of York allowed for a two week Enrichment period at the end of May.

Chelsea Hodgson
History

I was struck by the professionalism and dedication of the team of teachers, teaching assistants and support staff I worked with. Each student’s individual and distinct set of needs were considered and adapted for. This understanding meant that, in addition to concentrating on providing the optimum level of care for each student, opportunities to encourage learning could be tailored to individuals.

This experience highlighted the important role patience, persistence and kindness has in generating progress. Solidifying that, as teachers we must be conscious of the well-being of our students, we must know them, know their needs and adapt to them accordingly.

The PGCE Year: A Turning Point in My Life

The journey through the PGCE year has been an important, unforgettable experience. While I was working as an English teacher in Spain, I found out, almost by chance, about the extraordinary opportunity to train as a MFL in the UK. I started the application process immediately.

Although it was difficult at times, having two little children and living abroad which made travelling for interviews a challenge, describing my prior teaching experience, doing the professional skills tests and equivalency test, I was supported by University of York staff from day one.
The admin staff gave me accurate, detailed information about how to proceed, and were so helpful and approachable that I will never forget it.

Once on the course, my personal and family circumstances were taken into consideration at all times. I received support in so many ways, from the tutors, management, support staff and fellow students through to the point of making it through, finishing the course and securing my first teaching post.

From knowing very little about the British educational system, I have moved to being ready to take on my own classes in September.

Thank you all.

Time to enjoy the summer now!

Elvira Gonzalez Puigdomenech
Modern Foreign Languages

Going Beyond the Umbrella

Over my two teaching placements I had little experience working with pupils with autism, so I thought spending a week-long placement at ‘Wiltshire’, a specialist autistic centre based in The Joseph Rowntree School, would be perfect to gain this professionally valuable and enriching experience.

However, after finishing my placement there, I gained more than just strategies to teach pupils with autism effectively. I came to understand that people with autism are all different; they cannot be bunched under the same umbrella term ‘autistic’, because what does that actually mean?

It means that someone is on a large spectrum of different traits that makes it somewhat difficult for the individual to communicate and form relationships. This term is just too broad; no one should assume that they know what someone needs just because they have been labelled as ‘autistic’.

If I teach a pupil with autism in my NQT year, I now know how important it is to get to know the individual personally, to find out what it is that this person needs to not only entrust me with, but also enhance their learning. Completing this placement at the end of my ITT year as part of my Professional Enrichment has given me so much more confidence when I come to teach full time in September.

Rachael Cartwright
English

Resilience – Mine as well as Theirs!

At the end of my first placement I thought I had it sorted. I knew my teaching had a long way to go and that there were many aspects that I needed to work on, but I was sure everything was on track.

Halfway through placement two I realised that this wasn’t the case. I’d had difficult lessons; I had struggled under the pressure of an increased timetable; I’d shed a few tears, but the underlying feeling had been that I was in control until I began to teach a rather unpredictable Year 7 class whom I just couldn’t seem to crack...

I didn’t know what they were going to do from one lesson to the next. Some lessons they’d be perfect. In fact, my final observation was with this group and on that day they were a class of 32 shining angels. The day after this observation they were throwing glue sticks around the room.

I had no idea what I was doing so wrong. How could some lessons go by without a hitch whilst others were just 60 minutes of pandemonium? I was being flexible: trying to provide easier content on Fridays after P.E; trying some more hands-on activities; varying between 3 part lessons and lessons chunked into more bite-size sections. Nothing worked!

Perhaps if I had spent longer with that class I could have got into a better routine and understood why their attitudes varied so much. Maybe they were more sensitive to external factors than other groups? Maybe they just really hated it when I wore my green cardigan! I’ll probably never find out.

What I did find out, however, is that it isn’t just children who need to learn resilience, I needed to learn that as well. Working with this class drove me up the wall sometimes, but I never gave up. Perhaps I needed that group to teach me ‘stickability’ (as the Head at my old school used to call it) just as much as they needed me to painstakingly teach them geometry.

Resilience has been one of the key skills that I learnt in my second placement. Next time I teach a particularly erratic class I won’t be so disheartened. I’ll just knuckle down, bring out my resilience, and make sure we all make progress.

Eve Fazakerley
Mathematics
**Understanding Barriers to Learning**

Whilst on my second placement, I had the opportunity to teach a small class of pupils with SEN. There was one particular pupil who really stood out: a pupil with autism. Having never worked with autistic pupils before, I struggled to adapt my lessons to meet his needs. After some excellent advice from the SENCO, I began to gain a basic level of understanding of the difficulties faced on a daily basis by many autistic pupils.

In order to gain further knowledge, I opted to go to a school in York with a specialised autism unit for a week of Professional Enrichment. Throughout this week I had the excellent opportunity to work on a one-to-one basis with autistic pupils and, in the short time I was there, managed to establish relationships with these pupils based on an understanding of each individual child and their needs. I also spent a couple of days acting as a teaching assistant - it’s very interesting to see teaching from that point of view! I would recommend that all trainees take any opportunity to work with pupils with SEN whilst training - or even simply speak to a school’s SENCO - as it can really stand you in good stead for future classes.

Beth Howe  
English

**Creative, Cross-curricular, Collaborative**

Throughout my ITT year, a key focus of the course has been the value of teachers incorporating other specialisms into their own subject. A key learning experience demonstrating this occurred during a University trip to Eden Camp Museum. Over the course of the day, trainees from History, Drama, Geography and Computer Science collaborated to explore cross-curricular approaches that could be used on a ‘trip without a worksheet.’

After investigating the museum, groups of trainees planned and then demonstrated the ways in which Drama could support learning. Due to the creative element of the task, each group created distinctly different pieces: an emotive factual piece, a creative piece using contemporary performance approaches and a further piece using the hot-seating of World War 2 characters.

Via a plenary at the end of the fun-packed day (including a memorable puppet show), it was apparent that all of us had been inspired to use cross-curricular approaches in their future teaching practice.

Liam Narey  
History

**Supporting EAL Students in Maths**

During professional enrichment I observed EAL provision at an independent school with many international students.

I observed the benefits of seating different nationalities together to encourage the use of English as a common language for communication. I participated in targeted EAL lessons for international students to acclimatise to British values through the use of Michael Jackson and The Great British Bake Off. I also taught sixth form lessons to a Chinese group who were excellent mathematicians, but unable to access a vast amount of the mathematics because of language difficulties. I observed the use of writing frames for statistics, standard diagrams for mechanics and translations for pure mathematics to ensure all pupils were able to fulfil their mathematical potential. I created displays with the help of host teachers which included definitions of everyday words with very specific meanings in mathematics such as ‘simplify’, ‘explain’ and ‘describe’ as well as a list of e irregular verbs commonly used in questions.

Ultimately I was able to gain a deeper understanding of employing EAL specific strategies and gain an appreciation of the plethora of resources available to me as a mathematics teacher.

Mike Dennett  
Mathematics
Professional Enrichment – A Final Confidence Boost!

The ITT course has been challenging yet extremely rewarding and has gradually provided me with the skills and confidence to start my NQT year. Even so the prospect of actually starting my first teaching mob was till rather daunting, as well as exciting.

The opportunity to complete my ‘Professional Enrichment,’ should I wish to do so, in my NQT school was a fantastic and valuable opportunity to gain additional experience and insight into the school overall, familiarise myself with the school’s policies, procedures, meet staff, attend whole school and department meetings and most importantly, get to know some of the students.

For the first week of Professional Enrichment I was based in the school library working alongside the lovely librarian. Together we considered new ways in which we could promote reading, in particular across KS3. I recognised from research conducted for Assignment Three, how important student voice is; I therefore spent time speaking with KS3 pupils, during their library lessons, to gauge their thoughts on reading, how easy/difficult it was to find appropriate books and find out who their favourite authors were. Their comments revealed that pupils’ were spending a lot of time in lessons searching for a book rather than using time profitably on reading. It was also clear that books could be reorganised in perhaps a more accessible way so I took on the mammoth task of relocating all the KS3 Accelerated Reader books into genre specific sections, creating bright and colourful images/labels to show clearly where each genre of book was located.

I also created a ‘Books Bingo’ game; this will be added to pupils’ reading logs to promote and challenge pupils to read more books across various genres – enabling pupils to win prizes as well as hopefully just enjoy their reading!

For Professional Enrichment week two, I created ‘Literacy Skills’ resources for Year 8; spent time familiarising myself with English schemes of work and observing lessons across KS3 and KS4.

Following Professional Enrichment I feel even more confident and ready to start in... July!

Sarah Neal
English

Professional Enrichment: Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus?

Over the course of the PGCE at York, we have been encouraged to think about the government initiative character education, to not only build the character of, and offer a wide range of possibilities to, our pupils but also, to ourselves.

One of the highlights of the PGCE course at York was the opportunity to go into schools as a group of MFL trainees and put on a series of language taster sessions. I was asked to prepare a Latin session!

The sessions not only exposed the pupils to new languages but also took us trainee teachers out of our comfort zones, encouraging us to get creative with teaching something we’re not accustomed to and putting us in the shoes of pupils again, learning a new language.

Perhaps the greatest selling point of the PGCE course at York compared to others, however, was the opportunity of two weeks of ‘Professional Enrichment’. To the cynical mind, this could be seen as ‘filler’ – a box ticking exercise at the end of the course. In reality, however, it was a great chance to look in depth at an aspect of education; it made us more well-rounded teachers and as a result, will hopefully result in more well-rounded pupils!

The main aim of my professional enrichment was to observe the difference between teaching boys and girls in languages. I decided to do my Professional Enrichment, therefore, at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield which is a boys’ school.

In a world of differentiation, data-tracking and technology gimmicks, it was interesting to experience a different kind of teaching. The school prides itself on getting the best out of boys.

Boys and girls seem to be quite different as learners. It may be an obvious thing to say but, bizarrely, there seems to be little debate about this in the educational world at the moment.

It is well established that the best teachers know their classes, and know their pupils; they attempt to get the best from each individual pupil, and the best way to do this is to know what works for them.

A few things I discovered at QEGS were:

- A boys’ school studies on its stomach! Many boys are constantly hungry, both for information and food!
Deprive them of food, and their hunger for knowledge wanes as well!

- Boys, or at least many of them, are competitive – on the games field and in the classroom.

Creating competitive games makes subjects more appealing and fun; a culture that celebrates genuine not manufactured success is also attractive. If we, as teachers, can harness this competitive spirit, we can really push boys forward. We all know it’s easier (and nicer) to spot mistakes others have made than those we make ourselves – and boys love to point these out to ‘beat’ their partner! This, weirdly, is actually to be encouraged at QEGS, as they then learn from others’ mistakes.

- Finally, what works with many boys is a strict, firm but fair approach with clear guidelines and a teacher who takes on that ‘alpha male’ persona so that no-one else in the class does is absolutely essential to ensure the best progress.

Knowing our pupils as individuals, with gender being just part of a teacher’s consideration, helps promote the education of each child.

Perhaps some men are from Mars and some women are from Venus, but it is important to breakdown all kinds of stereotypes in education including gender stereotypes.

Ben Korosi
Modern Foreign Languages

Make ITT Work!

Teacher training is daunting enough without having to resume it after two years of ill-health and a (still very fresh) memory of how my teaching dream had ‘fallen apart’ once before.

Returning to the York PGCE in January, I knew I could fail at this. There was no guarantee my immune system wouldn’t let me down this time. I hadn’t set foot in a classroom for two years. I was terrified and this was my last chance... It was now or never!

I am not a big fan of settling in life. The inspirational teachers I know instil courage and capability in children who cross their paths. It was time for a dose of that courage and to trust an, albeit shaky, belief in my own ability.

Writing this, I want trainee teachers to know that an ITT course is possible no matter what life throws at them. The training is tough, but there is also so much fun to be had! You get to teach a subject you love to so many young and uplifting characters.

Every lesson is a theatrical performance of sorts! And you are privileged to meet an array of wonderful people, who will rally you and enrich you when you need them most. It is an unforgettable experience and very much what you make it. The adventures of one trainee teacher are very different to those of another – we, like pupils, all go on very different learning journeys.

Do not let any life event make you believe that you cannot do what you feel you were born to do. Bend and mould your training to fit your life. Make it work. If you are lucky enough to be on this course, you honestly deserve to enjoy this adventure. In the midst of all the assignments, observations, bad lessons, catastrophic starters and hysterical tears in the toilet, never forget just how very important you really are and just how much you want to be a teacher.

http://goo.gl/7PWtyn

Annie Cusack
Mathematics

https://goo.gl/UAhLWb

PGCE Partnership Newsletter
Contact details:
Claire Blackmore – educ21@york.ac.uk
Paula Mountford – paula.mountford@york.ac.uk
Twitter: @pgceHYork

Department of Education
Tel: +44(0)1904 323460
Website: http://www.york.ac.uk/education/
Thank you to colleagues in schools across and beyond our Partnership for your contributions to another wonderful year of Initial Teacher Training at York. Thank you to trainees for your enthusiasm, creativity, resilience, good humour and work ethic.