Welcome to the PGCE Partnership Newsletter

Welcome to this fifth edition of the PGCE Partnership Newsletter. We are in regular contact with our NQTs who are developing their skills and making excellent contributions to schools and learners across the country. We are proud to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences of their NQT year so far. Thank you to all of the schools who have been and still are involved in their training and support.

We are privileged to work with excellent schools, teachers, mentors and Professional Tutors. Several Professional Tutors and a Partnership Headteacher have generously contributed their views to this edition.

Thank you – together we all make a difference.

Norton College employed 5 NQTs from York in 2012

‘NQTs from the University of York Partnership show adaptability and flexibility in their teaching styles and the tenacity to survive. They are armed with an inner reserve and creative responses which are so important in teaching today.’

Eugenia Payne
Professional Tutor
Norton College

Working with PGCE Trainees – A CPD Opportunity

Catherine invited me back to the university to lead a session on using ICT in English with this year’s trainees. The session came at the end of my first half term as an NQT and it was the first chance I had had to pause and reflect on my experiences so far. Planning the session was a way of comparing my experiences as an NQT with what I had expected as a trainee the year before.

It was great to meet the current trainees and to begin to understand where I had come from.

A similar session by an ex-trainee last year had given me some really useful ideas and I hoped to do the same for this year’s cohort. I hoped to show that success with ICT is less about having any particular technical knowledge and more about being willing to experiment with different tools in order to enhance learning.

In the session we used wikis and message boards with the aim of making the process of writing more open, and we considered screen capture software as a way of making marking and feedback more engaging.

This CPD experience back at university proved doubly useful when I was asked to train staff at my school on a similar subject later in the term!

Matthew Hogarth
English NQT
Joseph Rowntree School

Manor CE Academy employed 3 NQTs in 2012

‘This year, we have employed three NQTs who were trained by the University of York Partnership, two of whom completed some of their initial training here at Manor on placement. It was obvious that they had been extremely well prepared for their placements and they demonstrated qualities that made us want to employ them.

All three NQTs have excellent subject knowledge and exemplary professional attributes. They work extremely hard to ensure that students receive the best possible experience both in the classroom and as part of the wider school. Their training has prepared them to be resilient and have the stamina required to teach a full timetable. I have been impressed by their innovative lesson planning and by how they have very quickly become established teachers.’

Julie Caddell, Professional Tutor
Manor CE Academy
NQT Advice for Trainees:

My advice for the next cohort of NQTs would be:

Focus on being a good teacher. It’s easy to get caught up in various things going on in the school: school performances, clubs, sports etc. But try to become good at your main job—being an effective teacher of your subject.

Speak to people! Approach key members of staff: heads of years, form tutors, learning support, SLT members. Ask them any questions you need to. Most people are more than willing to help and will gladly take the time and discuss your concerns which could be anything from student issues, school procedures or any worries you may have.

Work closely with your department. It could be anything from if you don’t know where resources are to how to approach a specific topic with a group of students they may have had experience teaching. Working as a team will make your life as an NQT much easier.

Lastly, everything happens very quickly. Students arrive on that first day in September ready to start learning, so there isn’t much “easing in” time. Take some time before September to visit the school if possible; discuss your timetable and classes with their previous teachers and try to get a little ahead on planning.

Usma Rabani
History NQT
St John Fisher School, Harrogate

(My) life as an NQT...

As I’m sure the current cohort has already realised, the PGCE year is exceptionally challenging. When I now look back on the number of tasks that had to be completed by the end of the course, I still don’t quite know how I finished it still in one piece!

Although I would love to say that the hard graft ends there, the NQT year brings a whole new set of challenges.

At the forefront of the minds of most NQTs is the importance of implementing effective behaviour management when, for the first time, they are left to their own devices with their very own classes. Students of all ages are ‘experts’ at very quickly finding out what they can and can’t get away with. So, set the rules from day one and stick to them, as ‘giving an inch’ will lead to far more than the metaphorical ‘mile’ being taken!

However, for me, the biggest challenge from the outset has been the sheer volume of work to trawl through by the end of each and every working day. Lesson planning is only one of many aspects of the job.

Other responsibilities at my school include marking, writing interim/full student reports, data tracking (to determine whether we are ‘adding value’ to the students’ education), running lunchtime revision sessions, attending parents’ evenings, house tutor duties, lunchtime and after-school duties, contributing to extra-curricular activities and, as a science NQT, planning/practising science experiments and assessing their risk. And, of course, you need to factor in the time you will need to spend working on your portfolio of evidence to become a fully qualified teacher.

Quite simply, this is all too much for one human being to cope with alone!

Although we would like to design all of our lessons from ‘scratch’, there simply isn’t enough time in the first year. The key to managing all these tasks effectively is therefore through communicating with colleagues and implementation of the ‘beg, steal and borrow’ approach. In my experience, colleagues are always very happy to give tips/advice about how to teach specific aspects of science lessons and (usually!) will have resources that can be adapted to suit your own teaching style. Also, science technicians have a wealth of information for how/hot to set up experiments, and will let you know what other teachers are doing at any given point in time. This will reassure you that you are moving through specifications at a suitable pace. Another very important source of support is your subject mentor who will guide you through the NQT year. He/she will always point you in the right direction to gain the best help and advice.

Although at the end of each half term I feel like I’ve gone twelve rounds against Mohammad Ali, I’m really enjoying this challenging career. There is nothing better than a group of students showing their gratitude for your efforts, and watching them progress in so many ways.

Rest assured that you will be well prepared for all this by the end of your year’s PGCE at the University of York!

Mark Pett
Chemistry NQT
The Grammar School at Leeds
Our NQTs in the Independent Sector:

**Being a Boarding Tutor as well as a History Teacher**

I’m a History NQT at an independent school and as part of my role, I am a boarding tutor. I have a tutor group who all board at the school, meaning I work in the boarding house one evening and one morning a week, along with the occasional weekend. The House is a co-ed sixth form boarding house, where the majority of students are international students.

If I had been told last year I would be doing this – and loving it – I would not have believed it. I love the challenge of duties as you have to be multiple people at once. A typical duty can involve helping students with homework, being an ICT technician, advising students on UCAS as well as being in charge of general safety and well-being. No two duties in the House are the same and the dynamic changes depending on the moods of the students.

The rewards of working in a boarding house are numerous, but the biggest perk is getting to know the students outside the classroom. The boarding house is their home, the students are relaxed and you see a completely different side to their personalities. The best moments are when the students just want to have a chat, which is when their skills, talents and abilities really shine through. You can always learn something from a student, and vice versa, allowing a mutual respect to develop beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

**Ellie Brown, History NQT Bromsgrove School**

**Being a Boarding Tutor as well as a Science Teacher**

Being an NQT in an independent boarding school was very much like being “thrown in at the deep end” at first. There are the long teaching days (until 5pm), the long weeks with lessons on a Saturday as well as the boarding house duties and the extra-curricular requirements – being given a rugby team to coach is quite daunting!

Within lessons I found there is a different atmosphere compared to my time in state schools; the teacher – pupil relationship is different because of the in loco parentis nature of a boarding school. I was able to build a rapport very quickly and this has helped massively in settling into my teaching role.

Teaching science here is amazing. The facilities are exceptional with separate labs designed for each science as well as specific technicians. I only have to teach my specialist subject.

The support available is also extensive; the community nature of the school means that there are always people on hand to offer advice, from other teachers and housemasters to senior staff.

**Billy Townend, Physics NQT Ampleforth College**

**Parents as Partners**

Prior to my NQT year I had not experienced life in an Independent school. Firstly, I was surprised by the impressive behaviour demonstrated by students throughout the school. Smaller class sizes are one reason for this (around 20 at most), but the role of the parents in their children’s education is a more significant factor.

As a nervous NQT, I stood at the front of the classroom in September and anxiously awaited the arrival of my first class, a Year 11 mixed-ability GCSE group. As the students poured in, chatting away, I wondered how long it would take me to get them seated and quiet. “Ok, sit down, look this way and listen”, I said in the most assertive tone I could muster. But that was it. They sat down, they looked and they listened. I assumed this was because they were unsure what to expect from a new teacher, but six months later they continue to be just as good. As a result, I feel that I have spent my NQT year getting to grips with the subject related aspects of teaching, rather than behaviour management.

The second key difference in the independent sector for me is the amount of communication with parents. As an NQT in their first term, regular emails and phone calls from parents questioning progress grades and other issues were quite difficult to deal with. Added to this were the Parents’ Evenings occurring on a near weekly basis. Although daunting at first, the keen involvement of parents is a huge asset to teachers as issues such as failing to hand in homework can be effectively dealt with by a quick phone call home. You have to be prepared to invest time working with parents, but ultimately, this regular communication can make your life in the classroom far easier and more enjoyable.

**Julie Cliffe, History NQT Akeley Wood School**
The CPD of Supply Teaching

If you don’t manage to get a permanent job straight away, then don’t panic. Join a supply agency. There is a lot you can learn from supply work and it brings new experiences.

If you are looking for a job in a specific area, it is a great way of getting your face known in local schools and building up a good reputation for yourself, and whatever your situation, it is a chance for you to practise your teaching techniques.

My top tip would be this: don’t be choosey. Be prepared to teach outside of your subject area, work as a teaching assistant or teach in a primary school. Although it can be daunting to find out you’ll be covering a topic you know little about, or even a language you don’t know, there will be work left for you to do and other staff are normally happy to help if you have any questions.

Every booking is also an opportunity to observe how different schools and different subjects plan and conduct their lessons, giving you the chance to compare and see what works best. Working as a teaching assistant can also give you the chance to work closely with the SEND department and keep up to date with the latest techniques for making lessons accessible.

Go in with an open mind. Ask questions, work hard and see it as an opportunity to continue learning.

Rosanne Burnip
MFL NQT
Longfield Academy

My NQT Year

The sheer volume of horror stories “out there” about the NQT year could make you feel woefully unprepared for starting in your first teaching post.

Throughout the year I have developed a range of strategies and methods to help me to avoid some of the more common pitfalls. Here are some of them:

Observations

Few people enjoy being observed. What is important is that you focus upon the students’ learning and ensuring that you are delivering “good” lessons. Sometimes having someone observe the lesson can help you to improve aspects of your teaching which end up enhancing the students’ learning so clearly then being observed has led to better outcomes even if it isn’t a particularly enjoyable professional development experience.

Use AFL and formative assessment techniques to ensure that students are progressing and then you are truly fulfilling your role as a teacher.

Other teachers

People can be strange. Everyone has different personalities and opinions; you will not see eye to eye with everyone and this is also the case in professional relationships with senior leadership and departmental colleagues. Try to rise above any squabbles, avoiding gossip, and act professionally alongside everyone so that personal issues never affect your work.

Parents

The one thing that most scared me before I started my NQT year was having to deal with parents. What if a parent is annoyed with me for telling off their child? What if they find a mistake in the homework I’ve set?

Observing parents evenings during your placement is certainly really helpful, but then of course as with teaching there comes a time when you have to lead the parents evening yourself.

From my experience, I would simply say treat parents courteously; listen to what they want to say and do not enter into an argument with them. Back everything you say with actual evidence such as mark books and examples of their child’s work; this is particularly helpful if what you have to say is possibly not going to be easy for them to hear.

Your NQT year can seem daunting but actually, it’s important to know what to expect. I’m sure by the end of your NQT year you will be able to create your own set of tips.

What’s important is that you not only know how to survive your NQT year, but that you thrive during it.

Rob McFaul
Physics NQT
Lady Lumley’s School
**Differentiation – PGCE to NQT**

Differentiation was a topic we considered during my PGCE year but generally in practice I focussed on making sure the bright students had an extension task. Now I appreciate that that is not even half of the story.

In my school, Norton College, differentiation is a whole school focus. We meet in teaching and learning groups once a fortnight and we discuss ideas of how we can bring more differentiation into our classrooms. Early on in this CPD journey, we decided, with much debate, that differentiation means 'allowing all students to make progress and work towards their own individual targets'.

So, we have thirty students in a classroom and we need to ensure that every one of them has an individual progression plan that takes into consideration their ability, their home life situation (e.g. free school meals), SEND, their verbal, non-verbal and quantitative abilities (CAT scores) and their behaviour. A lot to take in as an NQT! (I was only just managing to plan five lessons a day never mind think like this)

The first thing I did in response to this CPD and to apply my learning was to group the students according to ability or particular CAT score dependent upon the activity. This meant that instead of having individual tasks with hundreds of worksheets, I narrowed it down to 5/6 groups of similar abilities.

This is definitely making differentiation more manageable and meaningful to me in my NQT year.

**Dani Lancaster, Maths NQT Norton College**

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**Take Time to Make Time**

Something I've really had to learn this year is the importance of time off.

If I have one tip for surviving the NQT year it's making time for time off and not letting yourself feel guilty for it. You will be a better teacher if you have a life.

Early on in the year, I let myself get a bit bogged down with it all and my teaching suffered. I was tired, cranky and everything took much longer to do. It was a vicious circle I had to break and so break it I did!

Now I take time to live a bit, read for fun, write for pleasure, go out into the world and be.

At school I always go to the staff room at break for a coffee, even if I just grab it and go straight back to my classroom.

With this new approach, I am seeing an improvement in my attitude, my demeanour and in the responses I get from the students.

Live life!

**Sarah Richardson, English NQT Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull**

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**High Expectations create an NQT Highlight**

During my PGCE year the importance of improving the confidence, particularly of lower ability students, was emphasised.

During my NQT year so far there have been many occasions when I have seen the confidence levels of students with a lower ability rise.

There has been one moment in particular this school year that really stands out. My Year 9 very low ability set class was competing in the debating final against a top set class. I remember when the debating series began, one student who is very gifted verbally yet has huge writing difficulties due to dyslexia, expressed how unlikely it would be for his class to beat higher set classes! I reassured the class that their chances were as good as any class and that their debating skills were excellent. I emphasised the need for the class to harness their debating skills by remembering to strictly follow the rules and conventions of debating. I also emphasised that even though there would be just three representatives on stage,
everybody in the class was to research and give the representatives a broad array of arguments and facts.

On the day itself the three representatives of the class performed brilliantly in front of their entire year in the main hall. I felt a real sense of pride when the class won the final.

Most importantly I believe this victory has boosted the confidence of these students to such an extent that it has really improved their academic performances and generated the self-belief to tackle further challenges. I look forward to being a small part of their journey to future successes as I support them in my role as teacher.

John Maguire, English NQT Carmel Technology College, Darlington

A Long Tradition of Employing NQTs from the York Partnership

At The Joseph Rowntree School we work closely with York University and we are delighted to have been the recipients of some very strong young teachers over the years. This is a regular occurrence and has resulted in very competent members of staff who have not only been appointed to the school, but also have rapidly gained internal promotion.

These newly qualified teachers arrive with a strong work ethic, a sense of professionalism and excellent subject knowledge. When employing staff, I always look for a “can do” attitude and what else prospective teachers can offer the school – happily York NQTs show this in abundance!

Thank you to all involved in the York ITT Partnership for their excellent contributions towards training our teachers.

Maggi Wright, Headteacher The Joseph Rowntree School

NQTweachers

I have just completed the first half of my NQT year as a Science Teacher and it has, much like the PGCE year, been full of peaks and troughs (although the troughs are becoming far less frequent and not as deep!) The one constant has been the need to apply oneself and to work hard. I have enjoyed the challenges and the successes and I am lucky enough to work in an extremely supportive Science Department.

I must confess to being a luddite and cynic, so when Twitter was first mentioned during my PGCE, as a place for CPD, networking, resources and accessing all the most recent developments in Teaching and Learning, I was cynical!

However, as the GCSE English fiasco unfolded in August 2012 and information was coming to light at a quicker pace than even our 24hr media culture could cope with, I turned to Twitter to keep me up to date and set up a teaching Twitter account.

As the GCSE fiasco became yesterday's chip wrappers and a new school year approached, I turned to Twitter for advice. Suddenly I had followers and access to advice from experienced educators (Scientists, SLT, NQTs and hardened professionals from all curriculum areas). My cynicism dwindled and I took it upon myself to learn what a "hashtag" was and how to make the best use of Twitter as a teaching tool. Six months later I have 167 followers and I am approaching 1000 Tweets. The support and help of total strangers on Twitter has amazed me, and two examples of this spring to mind.

Struggling to set appropriate homework for a challenging Y8 class I turned to Twitter. Within an hour I had received over a dozen suggestions to help me with this. Teaching BTEC Science for the first time and feeling a little overawed, I turned to Twitter. Within minutes helpful "Tweachers" were giving me advice and pointing me in the direction of schemes of work and websites packed with helpful resources. Twitter is much more than a place to farm resources and get moral support; it is also a place to stay up to date with the latest Education News, developments and best practice.

Craig Ferguson, Physics NQT Millthorpe School @FergusonMr1
Working with non-readers and sub-level three learners at KS3

Since the start of my NQT year, I have been working with a group of year eight learners who find reading difficult. All of them are currently working at NC levels below level 3. In my endeavours this year to help them progress, this is what I have learned.

Engagement is key – how can you make the learning relevant to them? Make the lesson a creative process and put them in the driver’s seat (e.g. multiple choice scenarios where pupils can find out at the end ‘what they really did’, hot seating the teacher in character – giving pupils the power to question), whilst recognising that for some, imagination is difficult.

Use pictures and images as much as possible. Historical source analysis is great way to build subject skills in an accessible way – also a fabulous way to establish visual cues for new vocabulary.

Repetition is invaluable; pupils make the best progress when they have had the chance to live and breathe the subject matter in a multi-sensory fashion for a few weeks, higher-level thinking is easily built on this foundation work.

Connecting words to movements can be a simple, effective way to create memorable cues for more complex writing structures; we use physical movements for ‘so’, ‘however’, ‘because’ to build our sentences. Giving pupils the vocabulary to express their ideas is Important - and these aren’t always subject specific words!

Some tasks to consider:
- Picture de-coding
- Matching pictures and key words labels

Ashley Hoyland, History NQT
Wath Comprehensive School

What have I learnt as a Science NQT?

You are not just a teacher of your chosen subject, you are also a role model, a social worker, health and safety inspector etc. and will have to move between these in the blink of an eye. I find this one of the most exciting aspects of teaching. A day where I teach electrophilic addition to Y12, mentor a tutee with emerging behavioural difficulties and make photosynthesis accessible to Y9 can be fairly typical. All these role changes can be distracting and it’s important to take care of yourself as well as others.

It’s important to plan smart - one of the odd things about science is that the curriculum is spiral shaped. You’ll teach forces, acids and bases or photosynthesis to KS3, KS4 and Post-16 and if you’re (un)lucky, all in the same week. Don’t reinvent the wheel! It’s possible to use the same or similar lessons for a variety of audiences by changing your focus. This isn’t being lazy, it’s being smart. You spend more time adapting resources to suit the learners in front of you rather than creating them from scratch.

Don’t forget the stuff you’re good at - It’s easy to get bogged down in fixing all the little NQTisms that might have been identified from your observations and the same is true of PGCEisms. Don’t forget your strengths. You can learn even faster by helping your colleagues. Who said continuing professional development has to be a one way process?

As I’m quite good with ICT, I recently led a training session for the whole Science team at school on virtual learning environments. Doing things like this makes you a better teacher and gives you a confidence boost.

Luke Hillary, Chemistry NQT
Boston Spa

Integrating into a New School

The often spoken adage that you only get out what you put in is nowhere more true than in a school. Entering a new school, you are faced with the difficulty of integrating with both student and staff bodies. Throwing yourself into every opportunity you can is the best way to go about it. For students, make sure you help out with clubs. This allows them to see you in another light and helps you to form bonds with various age groups at once.

Staff can be even trickier to connect with. We work in a busy profession and we are often creatures of habit, hiding in our classrooms or self-designated corners of the staff room. If there aren’t any staff clubs, start one up! You will find that a large number of staff will gladly join a club. Furthermore, try to avoid staying in one corner of the staff room! Move around and get to know the people you are working with! Restricting yourself to one group of people makes training days uncomfortable and could prevent you learning excellent ideas from other subjects that you could use. The level of integration you achieve is entirely up to you. Get outside of your comfort zone and you will create excellent relationships with students and staff alike.

Mark Williams, History NQT
The King’s CE School
PGCE Partnership Newsletter

NQT Talk – CPD opportunity

Stepping back onto the University campus to talk to the new cohort of history trainees felt strange; surely it could not have been a full year since I was the trainee frantically scribbling down an NQT’s top tips for the PGCE? Despite the scary realisation of just how quickly time had flown by, coming back to do the NQT history talk was a fantastic CPD opportunity and a rewarding experience.

The talk was a great chance to share good practice on teaching and learning such as using the year to familiarise yourself with A-Level and GSCE mark schemes and teaching strategies as well as developing engaging, diverse and adaptable KS3 resources that can be used again.

It was also a good CPD opportunity as it enabled me not only to talk about being a reflective trainee and teacher (a very valuable skill) but also gave me a chance to thoroughly reflect on my teaching over the last twelve months and evaluate what has worked, what has not worked (re-enactment of trench warfare, year nine, Friday period 5 – enough said!) and how I can improve my teaching.

A vital part of professional development is continually ensuring that resources are engaging and inspiring which can be achieved through collaborative teaching. Sharing your best ideas, as well as pinching other people’s, and collaborating in the development of resources is one of the best pieces of advice I was ever given and sharing that with this year’s trainees was a helpful reminder to myself to keep using Twitter and TES to share and gather ideas.

Hannah Strickland, History NQT
St Aidan’s

Why Lady Lumley’s school employs York Trainees

At Lady Lumley’s School we highly value our partnership with York University. Helping to prepare the next generation of teachers is a privilege and offers subject mentors the opportunity to develop professionally themselves. We have a number of members of staff at Lady Lumley’s who are ex- York University trainees; four out of our five subject mentors trained at York three of them also having TLR responsibilities. In addition we have two further members of staff who also trained recently at York and have TLR posts, an NQT in Science and we have just interviewed and appointed a Science and English teacher, both existing trainees!

Clearly the key question to ask is what makes a York trainee so special? I feel this is down to a number of things and in particular:

-It is truly a partnership between trainee, university and school, with clear expectations and support given at all levels;

-Strong subject knowledge (trainee, university and school);

-Support in planning and delivery of lessons, enabling the trainees to see and deliver good lessons where the students are engaged and make progress;

-High expectations which lead to resilience, reflection and the courage to take a risk/try something different/new;

-The opportunity to work with a wide range of staff/students.

Lorraine Phippen
Professional Tutor
Lady Lumley’s School

PGCE - NQT – CPD

Starting as a trainee teacher, I remember Paula telling us how the PGCE would be over before we knew it. Looking back, she was indeed correct. Invited back to lead an English Curriculum Area session on ‘Applying for Jobs & Surviving Main Placement’ – I could not believe it was a year to the day that I had been sitting feeling anxious yet excited as a trainee.

The opportunity to return was a worthwhile one and allowed me to explicitly assess my own progress as an NQT. I realised had gone from spending hour upon hour on just one lesson in the early days of being a trainee to planning almost subconsciously, albeit every hour of every day!

Leading that PGCE session in December, I thrived on the trainees’ enthusiasm and their fabulous ideas. As an NQT it is difficult to plan one outstanding lesson a week never mind generating twenty one in just two and a half hours! So hearing their thoughts and time saving strategies was revitalizing at the end of a long first fifteen weeks of teaching.

Gemma Ormerod, English NQT
Beverley Grammar School

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