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A survival guide for ECTs

Welcome to SecEd's annual supplement for early career teachers (ECTs), offering 16 pages of advice to help new teachers survive and thrive at the chalkface. From professional conduct to safeguarding, from wellbeing tips to common challenges, and some useful classroom ideas to boot – this supplement is packed full of practical guidance for new teachers everywhere

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What does it mean to be a teacher?

What does it mean to be a professional? What does it mean to be part of the education profession? What does it mean to finally step up and become a teacher?

Matt Bromley

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Teaching isn't just a job, it's a profession. We tend to regard teaching as such because teachers must, among many other things:

1. Have a post-graduate professional qualification.
2. Answer to a professional body.
3. Comply with statutory obligations.
4. Uphold a set of professional standards.
5. Engage in on-going professional development.
6. Take collective responsibility for their profession.

Being a professional

On the first point, qualified teacher status (QTS) is a legal requirement if you are to teach in most schools in the UK and is desirable for all schools. You need a bachelor's degree to teach in primary, secondary and special schools.

On the second point, the Teaching Regulatory Agency (TRA) is responsible for awarding QTS and oversees regulation for the profession including misconduct hearings and the maintenance of teacher records. A teacher who is found guilty of misconduct can be "struck off" by the TRA and barred from teaching.

On the third point, teachers are bound by many legal duties and obligations including those pertaining to safeguarding and child protection (see page 8). Teachers are required to do all that is reasonable to protect the health, safety, and welfare of pupils. A teacher's legal responsibilities derive from three sources: the common law duty of care, the statutory duty of care, the duty arising from a contract of employment.

In particular, teachers are responsible under the Children Act 2004 which places statutory duties upon those who care for children. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires teachers to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their work.

On the fourth point, teachers in schools in England are also required to uphold the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011; see also pages 4-5). These standards define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded QTS. But the standards are also important for ECTs because they are used to assess all trainees working towards QTS and all those completing their statutory induction period. The standards are divided into teaching as well as personal and professional conduct.

One of the standards requires teachers to "uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school", which brings me to another important distinction between a professional and non-professional – professionals like teachers must always act within the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities, not just when they are "at work".

In other words, a teacher is never "off duty" – they must uphold high standards of professional conduct at all times.

On the fifth point, teachers must not allow their professional knowledge and skills to decay or outdate. They must commit to CPD throughout their careers to build upon their knowledge and keep it up-to-date and relevant as the tectonic plates of educational research and policy shift beneath their feet.

Partaking in CPD is not optional; it is a mandatory aspect of being a teacher. What's more, teacher CPD should develop subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge – helping teachers to become and remain dual professionals.

Teacher CPD must also lead to changes in daily practice and thus must be evaluated to measure its impact. The best CPD takes myriad forms and balances external expertise (conferences, courses, reading) with internal peer-to-peer support (teacher-led training, peer-observations, co-planning/teaching).

On the sixth point, teachers must take collective responsibility. This is, in fact, about both responsibility and accountability. Responsibility is taking ownership of the completion of a task whereas accountability is taking ownership of what happens next.

So, what does this all mean to you – an ECT joining the teaching profession?

Part of a profession

Teachers often make the mistake of thinking that, as qualified professionals, they are autonomous, afforded the freedom to work in isolation without interference from others.

However, there is a difference between individual autonomy – which is a form of isolationism – and professional autonomy – which is about working within a framework and taking collective responsibility for your actions and the results of those actions.

Professor Vivianne Robinson, in her 2011 book *Student-Centred Leadership*, argues that, although "feet of varying shapes should not be shoved into the same ill-fitting shoe", in the sense of professional practice – teaching and teacher-learning – one size does fit all. In other words, although it is assumed that any loss of autonomy is undesirable because it somehow reduces the professionalism of teachers, this isn't necessarily the case...

Although there is no question that increased coherence means reduced individual freedom, it does not necessarily imply decreased professionalism. Doctors are seen as professionals because they have mastered complex sets of shared diagnostic and treatment practices. They exercise their judgement about how those procedures are to be applied in any individual case and are held accountable for those judgements.

> *"Become an active member of the staffroom, connecting with colleagues to share good practice and find out more about your school's ways of working"*

Teachers need sufficient freedom to exercise their professional judgement about how to use the framework and to contribute to evaluative discussions about its adequacy. But that autonomy should also be constrained by the need to ensure effective teaching practice.

Standard professional practice provides the scaffolding that is required for the exercise of truly professional rather than idiosyncratic judgement.

In other words, although, as professionals, we don't want to eradicate our individuality, we do want to avoid individualism (habitual or enforced patterns of working alone).

Eliminating individualism should not be about making everyone the same and plunging them into group-think; it should be about achieving collective responsibility and accountability.

Being a professional is about what you do and how you behave. In their 2012 book, *Professional Capital*, Professors Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan say that being a professional is about "being impartial and upholding high standards of conduct and performance".

They add: "Being professional is about quality and character." Being a professional has more to do with how other people regard you, and how this affects the regard you have for yourself. Moreover, being a professional means having collective, rather than individual, autonomy.

In practice

Being a professional, then, means working within the scaffold of standard practice, assuming collective rather than individual autonomy; being a member of a profession rather than being idiosyncratic. It requires the building of a shared culture – a culture of high trust and low threat; a no-blame culture.

As an ECT, you will need to understand the frameworks and standard practices at play in your school, as well as in the wider education sector, and work as part of the collective. This involves understanding and following school policies.

Schools have many policies (of which about 30 are required by law). It is not possible to immerse yourself in the detail of every one of these documents – and some will not apply to you as an ECT – but I'd suggest you quickly get to know what's in the key school policies that do affect your daily practice.

This is likely to include the ECT policy, staff discipline policy, child protection and safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, SEND policy, assessment policy, etc.

I'd also suggest you familiarise yourself with key national policies and guidance that affect you including *Keeping children safe in education* (DfE, 2023), the *SEND Code of Practice* (DfE, 2014), and *Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools* (DfE, 2013).

As an ECT, I'd also suggest you fully engage in professional networks, both in your school and beyond it. Work closely with your subject team on collaborative planning and standardisation. Work with other ECTs in your school on your induction. Work with pastoral colleagues to understand your role as a form tutor.

Work with admin staff to understand your school's systems and procedures, including for taking registers, inputting assessment data, communicating with parents, completing reports, etc.

Work with key postholders such as the SENCO, Pupil Premium, and EAL leaders to understand your role in meeting pupils' individual needs.

And become an active member of the staffroom, informally connecting with colleagues to share good practice and find out more about your school's ways of working, as well as socialising in order to promote good health and wellbeing.

Outside of school, I'd suggest you become a member of a subject association as well as join a teaching union. If you work in a multi-academy trust or active local authority, I'd suggest you take part in ECT and subject networks to access support from across the trust or district, learning what works in different schools.

As an ECT, what you need is to become a part of what Professor John Hattie in his 2012 book *Visible Learning for Teachers* calls a "community of teachers ... to work together to ask questions, evaluate their impact, and decide on the optimal next steps". Prof Hattie begins that book with a medical analogy and refers to the doctors he's witnessed first-hand "following scripts" and working with set procedures: "Throughout the treatment, the impact of (doctors') interventions was monitored, changed, and led to the critical decisions.

"Teams worked to understand the consequences of treatments and evidence was the key to adaptive professional decision-making – all aiming to maximise the impact."

And that is the key to being a successful member of the teaching profession: know thy impact! SecEd

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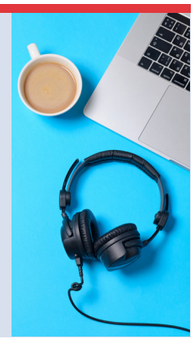
SecEd Webinar: Surviving and thriving as an ECT

SecEd's annual ECT supplement will this year be complemented by a free webinar offering advice and support to new teachers. Taking place on October 9, the webinar will feature some of the experts from this supplement who will offer their tips and advice. Themes will include teaching tips, workload, work/life balance, behaviour, and creating healthy working habits. You can watch live or on catch-up. Register via ***https://buff.ly/3X24I4w***



FURTHER INFORMATION

- *DfE: Teachers' Standards, 2011:* ***https://buff.ly/3USA5wU***
- *DfE: Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools, 2013:* ***https://buff.ly/3WsNtsS***
- *DfE: SEND Code of Practice, 2014:* ***https://buff.ly/3JZ0rqA***
- *DfE: Keeping children safe in education, 2023:* ***https://buff.ly/2InRv0W***

A guide to professional conduct for ECTs

Maintaining the professionalism that is required of a teacher is not necessarily an easy feat. We offer ECTs 10 ways to build and maintain your professional persona

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When I think of teachers' professionalism, a past headteacher's comment still resonates with me. After a gruelling autumn term, she praised her exhausted colleagues for "keeping up the act of being a good teacher all day".

She hit the nail on the head – staying in that professional zone for hours on end is no small feat. This sentiment recently came back to mind while discussing Part 2 of the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011) with a group of ECTs.

Perhaps we are best to heed the advice of Irish-American writer Frank McCourt, who quipped: "You're starting your teaching career, and it isn't an easy life. I know. I did it. You'd be better off as a cop. At least you'd have a gun or a stick to defend yourself."

This is echoed with a training session my colleague, Marie Perry, and I run with ECTs on professionalism. When I cheekily ask them if they have felt like swearing at a student, half of them admit they have. However, that said, we cannot swear at children, let alone threaten them with a gun or a stick.

More than just instructors

Great teachers are more than just experts. We manage behaviour, model good character, and support student wellbeing. Respect comes from strong personal and professional conduct, not just good lessons.

Teachers act "in loco parentis," which means we are legally responsible for student safety and wellbeing. The *Teachers' Standards (Part 2)* emphasise high ethical conduct, regardless of experience or qualifications. Failing these standards can lead to support programmes or even losing one's teaching qualification.

Therefore, following professional guidelines and prioritising students' wellbeing is essential, not just for avoiding misconduct, but because it's the right thing to do.

As such, here are 10 ways to ensure you maintain your professional persona...

1, Dress code

Unfortunately, we have to ditch the flip-flops and provocative t-shirts. Schools are professional settings, and our attire should reflect that. It sets the tone for students and shows we mean business. Nonetheless, this doesn't mean we can't tweak our attire to show quarks of our personality. I like to dress in black like Johnny Cash whereas my colleague, Ralph Addy, wears stately Ghanaian smocks (for another example, follow @TheTeacherWins and check out Gurdeep Singh's exceedingly colourful wardrobe).

2, Speak clearly and professionally

Slang is out, eloquence is in. While accents and dialects are to be celebrated (own your background!), strive for clear, formal speech. Think "elaborative code", as coined by sociologist Basil Bernstein back in the 1960s – it helps students to develop their own oracy, communication skills and understanding of academic vocabulary. Avoid pub talk, football banter, or telling students what you really think about the headteacher. And yes, no swearing of course.

3, Stay calm and professional

Being a teacher is tough. You'll get frustrated, maybe even humiliated. But remember, it happens to everyone. Most students and parents respect you, and your job is incredibly rewarding. Think of it as performing on a stage, as sociologist Erving Goffman suggests when discussing "impression management". Keep it professional "front stage" (in class). If you need to vent, find a colleague "back stage" for a cathartic chat. Breathe, regroup, and move on.

4, On and off-duty

Students mimic our behaviour. Model good habits: be punctual (as a senior leader in charge of cover, I cannot tell you how unimpressed I am with regularly late colleagues), move safely around the school (no careless rushing), adjust your voice level for different activities, and treat everyone with respect and courtesy (even if they annoy you).

This applies outside of school too. I once got a night bus from Euston to Enfield. At the back of the bus was a rather drunk teacher loudly telling a bunch of unimpressed girls that the kids he teaches were "chavs" and "slags" whose behaviour was "feral". He said the school was "shite" and that the headteacher had "no control".

When he said where he taught, I introduced myself and said I would be joining him on September 1. He looked horrified – and so he should be.

5, Check your social media

While we shouldn't be overly policed outside of school by the restrictions of our professional context, please be wary of your social media use. Pictures of you worse-for-wear with your mates, statements slagging off politicians, and "likes" of dubious social media posts could land you in trouble.

You should also be aware of who you know. While I don't "connect", "link in" with or "WhatsApp" my students, I am friends with a few of their parents out of school. Nothing's watertight on social media.

6, Read the Teachers' Standards

Don't just skim Part 2 of the *Teachers' Standards* (a core document for your role). Fully grasp its expectations and how they translate to your daily work. Part 2 stipulates treating students with respect, safeguarding their wellbeing, and upholding ethical behaviour both inside and outside of school.

Teachers must also respect British values (see point 8 below), avoid exploiting students' vulnerabilities, and follow the school's ethos and policies (see point 9). Additionally, they must be familiar with and act within the legal frameworks governing their profession (see points 7 and 10).

> *"When he said where he taught, I introduced myself and said I would be joining him on September 1. He looked horrified – and so he should be"*

7, Politics and religion

Lively classroom debates on political or controversial issues can be engaging but remember the boundaries. Sections 406 and 407 of the 1996 Education Act limit the promotion of specific political views in schools. This means teachers should present opposing viewpoints objectively (see DfE, 2022). Critical thinking is key – we want students to form their own informed opinions, not simply adopt ours (for more tips, see my 2022 *SecEd* article on this topic).

8, Challenge intolerance and extremism

Don't let the above put you off challenging sexism, racism, homophobia, and religious intolerance. Tackling bigotry is not the same as telling students who to vote for. Understanding British Values (DfE, 2014) is also crucial. These values, like democracy and tolerance, may not be unique to Britain, but they're fundamental. Teachers are expected to not only promote them in lessons but embody them in their actions. If you struggle to respect others, uphold the law, or believe in democracy, teaching might not be for you.

While policy-makers, including government ministers, following on from others, have attacked schools for being supposedly woke, we are on the front-line of tackling extremism and promoting respect and tolerance. Not only does this relate to the *Teachers' Standards* and British Values already mentioned, but it is also why we have Prevent training.

9, Understand your school's culture

It is wise to familiarise yourself with school policies, especially those related to personal and professional conduct, attendance, social media use, data protection, and disciplinary processes. These policies outline expectations and provide guidance in various situations. Knowing where to find these policies is crucial, not only for avoiding any violations, but also for raising concerns about colleagues' behaviour through proper grievance or whistleblowing channels, should the need arise.

> *"Don't just skim Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards. Fully grasp its expectations and how they translate to your daily work"*

10, Vital school policies

Discuss your school's ethos with your ECT mentor, induction tutor or line manager. If available, you should review the school's mission and vision statements to gain a deeper understanding. You could also explore the school's origins, purpose, and impact on the local community to get a sense of its ethos. Most importantly, ensure your behaviour and, if relevant, teaching approach, reflect these values.

Final thoughts

You have one of the best jobs in the world. While it is immensely rewarding most of the time, there will be moments where we feel like letting our standards slip. It is imperative, therefore, that we remain aware of our professional persona at all times, lest we forget why we became teachers in the first place. SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *DfE: Teachers' Standards, 2011:* ***https://buff.ly/3USA5wU***
- *DfE: Guidance on promoting British values in schools, 2014:* ***https://buff.ly/44yHYee***
- *DfE: Guidance: Political impartiality in schools, 2022:* ***https://buff.ly/3UT3PKc***
- *Jones: Political impartiality: Ten ways to sit on a fence, SecEd, 2022:* ***https://buff.ly/4dvjfvp***

The Highway Code for ECTs

With high numbers of ECTs still quitting in their first few years, it is essential that we develop healthy habits and look after ourselves on our teaching journey...

I am a confident driver these days. But that hasn't always been the case. It took many lessons (and driving tests) to finally remove the "L" from my car. An unexpected speed awareness course a few years later also contributed to my CPD portfolio and sharpened my driving skills.

For ECTs, the journey into teaching and schools can feel long, demanding and complex. Like my attempts to learn road signs and rules, ECTs have a plethora of new language, skills and processes to navigate.

To help you along the way, here is my "Highway Code" for ECTs – five best practices that I have used to support both ECTs and mentors.

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1, Limit your speed

We know that teacher burn-out is a prevalent issue in schools, especially for new teachers – a quarter of ECTs (25.9%) quit after three years at the chalkface; after five years, almost a third (32.5%) have walked away (see, SecEd 2024).

We know that heavy workloads, competing demands and work-related stress can contribute to high levels of exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.

While mentors don't want to put ECTs off at the first junction, it is important to recognise these issues and to acknowledge that they are a risk in any school environment.

It is important for ECTs to recognise their limits and to be supported in managing wellbeing. A whole-school culture is needed to support this, but ECTs will perhaps need support in understanding the risks in the context of one-to-one discussions with mentors too.

One recent research study (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017) found that teachers who routinely engage in self-care practices, such as setting boundaries and seeking support, report higher job satisfaction and lower levels of burn-out.

But the truth is that ECTs often do not get this right at the first junction. Like a driver having just passed their test, the desire to simply get going in the classroom and make a good impression can lead to the creation of unhealthy working practices.

To limit your rev counter, try discussing your priorities each week with your mentor. With my ECTs, I often encourage them to make use of three Ds: What needs to be done? What can you defer? What do you need to ditch until further notice?

You might also consider making time for meditative activities (e.g. breathing techniques, self-reflection, meditation). These can help you to keep stress in check and to remain optimistic while developing emotional resilience (Waters et al, 2020).

2, Caution: Bumps ahead

Teaching is complex. ECTs and mentors alike often face unexpected obstacles and challenges in the classroom. However, some of these challenges can be anticipated and considered in advance.

Reflection is a powerful tool for professional growth and development. By regularly reflecting on the day-to-day experience of teaching, ECTs with their mentors can identify areas for improvement and refine their teaching strategies.

Moreover, proactive planning and preparation can help all teachers to anticipate potential challenges and develop strategies for addressing them effectively.

In addition to reflective practice, collaborative inquiry has emerged as a promising approach for supporting teachers in addressing classroom challenges. One study (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009) found that teachers who participated in collaborative inquiry groups reported increased confidence, improved instructional practices, and enjoyed greater job satisfaction.

By engaging in collaborative problem-solving with colleagues, ECTs can leverage collective expertise to navigate challenges and enhance professional practice. Ways to help achieve this might include:

- Habitually sharing at least one reflection from practice with your mentor each week. It is important that this does not always focus on teaching practice. It might include the needs of a student, particular learning behaviours, or an aspect of education research.
- Keep a written note of questions that you want to ask your mentor. This might be about specific systems, processes, or aspects of school culture that you want to make greater sense of.
- Carve out time with your mentor to reflect on a common issue or challenge you are facing in the classroom. This might be around specific groups of students or an issue such as punctuality to lessons.

3, Service Station

Mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting the development of ECTs. Indeed, effective mentoring can lead to increased teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

However, it is essential for mentorship to be meaningful and tailored to the needs of the ECT. The government's Early Career Framework has provided some excellent CPD resources for schools in recent years. However, is has also created a rigid system of delivering training with limited scope for mentorship in some schools.

Like the driver on a long journey to their destination, it is vital for ECTs to practise, with mentors, the value of pausing to have a coffee, take a break, refresh and restart their journey.

One study (Johnson et al, 2017) emphasised the importance of collaborative, inquiry-based approaches to mentorship, where new or novice teachers actively engage with their mentors in reflective dialogue and problem-solving. More recent research (Chang et al, 2021), meanwhile, highlights the benefits of mentorship that incorporate coaching and feedback mechanisms.

By leveraging mentorship opportunities and "service stop" conversations in schools, ECTs can accelerate their professional and personal growth and build a good habit for the longer journey into teaching. Some questions for you to consider with your mentors might include:

- How often do you pause to reflect on your own practice?
- Where are the "service stop" moments for you to reflect with others?
- In addition to your mentor, who could you share these moments with in school?
- More widely, when do you take a break each day (and each week)?

4, The beauty spot

In the midst of challenges, it is important for ECTs to celebrate their successes and acknowledge their progress. While it is easy to focus on what still needs to be done and how much there is to still learn, understanding how far you have come in your journey is an important thought process for any educator.

By cultivating a habit of capturing and reflecting on wins, teachers can maintain a sense of motivation and purpose in their practice (Seligman, 2002).

Furthermore, the role and importance of "gratitude practices" in promoting wellbeing and job satisfaction is clear (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). By expressing gratitude for the positive aspects of their teaching experiences, ECTs can cultivate a positive mindset and build resilience in the face of challenges. Examples of practices that I have encouraged with ECTs and colleagues include keeping a gratitude journal and saving and recording thank you cards, positive comments or support from parents, students, and colleagues.

Also, try regularly calling parents/families to celebrate individual students (rather than doing this only when students have got it wrong). This can be an incredibly fulfilling professional activity.

5, Warning signs

Many drivers will have experienced that stressful moment when we are confronted with a warning symbol. It is a good idea to pull over so that you can understand what the warning light means and what to do about it. You can see where I am going with this...

It is important for ECTs and mentors to be vigilant in recognising their own professional and personal dashboard. By this, I refer to noticing those signs when assistance and support might be needed.

It is vital to seek help early and access appropriate resources to address challenges effectively. Creating a culture of collaboration and support in schools can encourage ECTs (and all staff for that matter) to seek assistance without fear of judgement or stigma. Additionally, as an ECT, learning from these experiences and seeking feedback can contribute to professional growth and development.

Warning signs might include when you are regularly raising your voice with a particular class or student or feeling burnt-out or unhappy. Ways to continue to monitor your own dashboard as an ECT include:

- Ensure there is a regular check-in agenda item in the mentor/ECT meetings so that you can acknowledge how you are feeling.
- Recognise with your mentor when there are particular pressure points in the school calendar (e.g. data collection, exam periods, start or end of terms) and consider what further action might be needed to handle these.
- Acknowledge when you are struggling and when a problem seems genuinely discomforting. It is important not to normalise this.
- Ensure that behaviour policies are followed carefully to ensure that you (and your mentor) have an accurate picture of any emerging challenges in the classroom around specific students.
- Check-in regularly with other ECTs to ensure you understand what other colleagues new to the school or profession are facing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *Chang, Sung & Chen: The impacts of mentorship programs on early career teachers' professional growth: A systematic review and meta-analysis, Teaching and Teacher Education (102), 2021.*
- *Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb: Rethinking teacher leadership: A study of innovative practices, Teachers College Record (111,1), 2009.*
- *Emmons & McCullough: Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective wellbeing in daily life, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (84,2), 2003.*
- *Ingersoll & Kralik: The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says, Education Commission of the States, 2004.*
- *Johnson et al: The support gap: New teachers' early experiences in high-income and low-income schools. Education Policy Analysis Archives (25,1), 2017.*
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- *Skaalvik & Skaalvik: Still motivated to teach? A study of school context variables, stress and job satisfaction among teachers in senior high school, Social Psychology of Education (20,1), 2017.*
- *Waters et al: Contemplative education: A systematic, evidence-based review of the effect of meditation interventions in schools. Educational Psychology Review (32,2), 2020.*

Safeguarding: Getting it right

From the moment you start in your role in school, you have safeguarding responsibilities and form a vital part of the safeguarding culture in your school. Where do you begin?

Elizabeth Rose

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All staff have a part to play in ensuring that there is a culture of safeguarding within school and you must ensure that you are working to keep children safe at all times. In this article I will explore a few key areas that you need to be aware of to ensure your practice and your students are safe.

Safer working practice

Safer working practice is essentially about establishing the safest possible environment in which children and adults can learn and work. It is about making choices to ensure your conduct is professional and safe, and being part of a transparent and open culture in which everyone can work together to keep children safe.

All staff need to read and understand the code of conduct (sometimes called a "staff behaviour code"). This key document outlines the expectations of your behaviour and is an integral part of safeguarding within a school.

Knowing where the boundaries are in terms of topics to discuss with students, how to conduct yourself in lessons, what to do in the event of challenging behaviour, and the guidelines for contact with students outside of lessons is essential to ensure you and your students are safe.

Familiarising yourself with this document and ensuring that this is embedded in your practice is important, and you should feel empowered to seek advice (from the headteacher or designated safeguarding lead) or ask questions about this if you are unsure of anything.

Something that can be particularly challenging for newer members of staff are incidents where other staff have not adhered to safer working practice guidelines. Your school will have a policy to support in reporting and responding to either lower level concerns about staff conduct or allegations against staff. You should always feel that you can report any concerns and should never feel that you can't raise an issue with another member of staff, including more senior staff or the headteacher.

THE SECED PODCAST: EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING

This episode of the SecEd Podcast looks at the role of the classroom teacher and teaching staff when it comes to effective safeguarding practice, offering insights, tips and practical dos and don'ts. Guests included Elizabeth Rose. Listen back via: ***https://buff.ly/3vBHBCa***

Know your students well

Safer working practice builds a culture where children can develop professional, trusted relationships with adults in the school. A key part of effective teaching and safeguarding practice is to get to know the children in your classes so that you can implement strategies to support their progress and spot any concerning signs or issues that may indicate a child needs safeguarding support.

It is important to understand the SEND needs of children in your class and find out (and use) any strategies that suggested for them.

Positive student behaviour also supports a strong culture of safeguarding, so having a good understanding of the behaviour policy and seeking help if and when you need to, as well as understanding individual behaviour support plans or risk assessments, will help you to establish this in your lessons.

It is equally important to have high expectations of behaviour around school (at social times, for example) and seek support from relevant staff if you are unsure of how to tackle anything of concern.

Form tutors will be a useful source of advice and information about children and being alert and aware of any challenges children are facing (if they are a young carer, for example) can help you to adapt your approaches (while still adhering to relevant policies) to create a safe and nurturing culture in your lessons.

> *"Don't wait to see if things change or get worse – feel confident that you are doing the right thing by sharing the information"*

What to report (and how)

If you have noticed or heard something concerning about or from a child, you must report this to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) immediately. It is more likely that you will notice something of concern before a child makes a direct disclosure (although not always) and those smaller pieces of information that you could provide are likely to be very helpful in understanding and piecing together what is happening.

Don't wait to see if things change or get worse – feel confident that you are doing the right thing by sharing the information and ensure that it gets to the right person before the end of the school day.

You should always follow the procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns in your school, but go and speak to someone in person as soon as possible if you think a child may be at risk of harm.

If a child does disclose to you directly, or you become aware that a child is experiencing abuse or neglect, it can be upsetting. It is really important that you speak to the DSL in school if you are upset, concerned or worried about something you have seen so that you can be supported.

You should receive feedback on any concerns raised so that you can feel confident that they have been dealt with, although you may not be given full details of the outcome.

In the vast majority of cases the safeguarding lead in your school will take action following a concern, but you can also contact children's social care yourself if you feel a child is still at risk of harm. Details of how to do this will be within your school safeguarding policy or look at your local safeguarding children partnership website.

Your responsibilities

Every member of staff has an important part to play in keeping children safe and safeguarding is not just the responsibility of the safeguarding team. All areas of school life come under the umbrella of safeguarding and keeping this idea at the heart of your practice will ensure that you and your students are safe. SecEd

Five ideas to retain your joy in teaching

A third of new teachers quit after five years. What can you do to stay mentally well and retain your joy in teaching?

Emily Kenneally

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Just as the students in your care grow throughout the years, so do you. You will experience highs and lows in your careers. And each event will shape you as an educator.

You may face periods of challenge so it is important to recognise that these experiences are valid. We are not encouraging you to avoid or supress difficult feelings or frustrations – but finding strategies, such as the ones discussed below will help to support your mental health and ensure that you retain the joy you find in your role.

1, Your non-negotiables

Something we often invite teachers to think about is whether you set yourself wellbeing non-negotiables. These are firm and immovable rules that you keep for yourself in order to prioritise your wellbeing each day or each week. It is a powerful technique. Some examples we have heard from teachers and education staff include the following. They all look quite different and are specific to each person:

- Once a week, I prioritise leaving school when the bell goes – without fail and no matter what is left to do.
- I go to the gym twice a week. If I don't do this then I know I will become more stressed.
- I have a pre-bedtime ritual that I have to stick to or I can't sleep!
- I do not check emails after 6pm – my mind is whirring well into the night if I do.
- I batch cook every Sunday so I know I have meals sorted throughout the week. It takes the pressure off.

So, is there something you can stick to each week to create some space and help yourself feel well?

We are conscious that having non-negotiables can involve setting boundaries, which can be challenging, especially for ECTs...

2, Comfortable saying no!

Many teachers are uncomfortable saying no. Often it is due to a well-meant fear of letting people down. However, our advice is to get comfortable saying no. It is an important tool for self-care in the workplace. This means leaning into uncomfortable conversations.

There is some excellent quick advice in a resource on the Education Support website entitled *Saying no: Advice for setting boundaries* which centres on being firm but friendly and having go-to phrases for when you really mean no. These helpful phrases to have in your pocket include:

- Thank you for considering me for this. Let me check my diary before I commit.
- I can't realistically commit to this without letting go of some other tasks. Let me discuss with my line manager.
- That timeframe won't be possible for me due to other commitments.
- My plate is full at the moment, but thank you for thinking of me.
- I'm going to take time to fully consider this. I will respond to you when I have an update.
- I have some concerns. Can we find some time to talk this through?
- Has anyone else been considered for this?

3, Healthy relationships

When was the last time you spent quality time with your family and friends? The relationships we have both in the workplace and at home can have a huge impact on our mental wellbeing.

Social health is often the first casualty during difficult times, but it is important not to neglect our personal relationships due to work, as these can be a great source of strength. Never forget: you may be replaceable at work, but never to your friends or family.

Having good work relationships makes our jobs more enjoyable, too. Indeed, it is often said that people who have good friends at work are much more likely to be engaged in their roles.

Martin Seligman, in his 2012 book *Flourish*, also notes that happiness cannot be achieved without social relationships.

Colleagues can also support each other with the emotional toll of working in a high pressure environment.

An Education Support resource entitled *Supporting each other* offers strategies to enable and encourage healthy working relationships.

4, Prioritise recuperation

It may feel counterintuitive, but rest is an important aspect of productivity. It is also essential in beating stress and burn-out.

Taking breaks ensures that you are making the most of your time. Staying an extra hour to mark papers or working through your lunch break is not necessarily the best use of time if you are exhausted.

You could start by setting smaller goals to incorporate more rest into your day. Don't try to change everything at once. Some example goals include:

- Set a time to finish each day during the term. This could give you time to have dinner with family, exercise or meet friends.
- Set free time to rest properly on weekends and week nights.
- Sign up to a regular activity, such as a class or club. Connecting with yourself and your passions can help to avoid burn-out.
- Take your entire lunch break whenever possible.
- Set time to move your body. This could be vigorous exercise or something gentle like a walk, yoga or stretching.
- Separate home and work – i.e. keep marking at school if possible

Another useful Education Support resource is *Boundaries, rest and letting go*, which shows how teachers can take ownership of their boundaries, make time for rest, and keep the professional and personal separate.

5, Seek support

It is important to reach out for support if you are struggling – you are only human and everyone struggles at some point. All teachers and education staff can call Education Support's free and confidential helpline 24/7. You don't need to be in crisis to call. When you call you will talk to a qualified counsellor for immediate, confidential emotional support. Visit the Education Support website too for free, expert-led resources (including details of funded wellbeing sessions for those working in Wales). SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *Education Support offers help or advice on any issue facing those working in education. Contact the free 24/7 helpline on 08000 562 561 or* ***www.educationsupport.org.uk***
- *Education Support: Resource: Saying no: Advice for setting boundaries:* ***https://buff.ly/4bZZj2j***
- *Education Support: Resource: Supporting each other:* ***https://buff.ly/3Kb4wbi***
- *Education Support: Resource: Boundaries, rest and letting go:* ***https://buff.ly/4as80Bd***

Thriving, not just surviving

Cultivating your wellbeing in your first years of teaching is key if you want to thrive and not simply survive. Here are eight secrets to get ECTs started

Shanti Chahal

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Embarking on a career in teaching is an exhilarating journey, brimming with opportunities for growth and impact.

However, anyone who has worked within education knows that the initial years of teaching can also present daunting challenges that test one's resilience and wellbeing.

According to Department for Education figures last year, 25.9% of teachers left the profession after three years, with this proportion rising to 32.5% after five years (see SecEd, 2024).

But as ECTs, prioritising wellbeing becomes not just a matter of survival but a cornerstone of thriving in the profession. At this early stage of your career it is essential to set up habits that will support you throughout your career.

In this article, I want to delve into some specific strategies and evidence-based tips to empower teachers in managing their own wellbeing effectively.

1, Be proactive

Transitions within your first few years of teaching usually mark a significant shift in responsibilities and expectations. Whether you have undertaken a PGCE, TAP, Schools Direct, BA in Education or are reaching the end of an ECT year, your responsibilities will shift.

Research tells us that micro-habits are key to changing behaviours to ensure that we form good habits. For example, walking 15 minutes a day is said to increase a person's life expectancy by up to three years (Wen et al, 2011).

Take time to reflect on the strategies that have previously worked well and translate them into actionable goals. Whether it is scheduling regular exercise, carving out time for friends and family, or prioritising easy and quick meals during parents' evening week, consider ways that you have previously prioritised your wellbeing.

- Identify three key micro-habits that are important to you in maintaining your wellbeing each week.
- Set yourself a manageable target to ensure that these continue.

2, Manage your digital wellbeing

In today's hyperconnected world, managing digital wellbeing is paramount for maintaining a healthy work/life balance. Research from Duke University in 2019 found that "batching notifications" into three time periods during the day had a positive impact on attentiveness and mood (Fitz et al, 2019). This was in contrast to ignoring notifications which led to increased anxiety.

Think about how you can adopt specific strategies to mitigate digital overload. By setting boundaries with technology, we can better our safeguard mental and emotional health while fostering a more sustainable approach to work.

- Consider using the scheduling of emails to avoid constant notifications.
- Use folders within your inbox to avoid being overwhelmed by messages and schedule time during the work day to action emails in each folder.
- Be strict about establishing designated times for social media engagement, especially if you are following accounts which are linked to work.
- Utilise digital wellbeing controls on your devices to control which notifications you receive.
- Many schools already have an email curfew. Consider setting your own curfew for checking emails to coincide with the other boundaries that you have in place.

3, Tell someone if you are struggling

Navigating the challenges of the teaching profession can be daunting, but no-one should face them alone. As an ECT or trainee teacher, it is important to be proactive in reaching out to trusted individuals who have the tools to support you, such as your ECT mentor or ECT lead within the school.

Cultivating meaningful relationships with your mentor and department colleagues not only fosters a sense of belonging but also serves as a protective factor against burn-out. Remember, vulnerability is not a sign of weakness but a catalyst for growth and resilience.

- Be honest with your mentor, head of department or head of year if you are finding something challenging. There may be additional support available which you are not aware of.
- If you do find yourself struggling and wishing to speak with someone, consider contacting Education Support, a national charity dedicated to providing support and improving the mental health and wellbeing of all who work in education. Their support is free and confidential and you can contact them with any work or life-related problem (see further information).

4, Work smarter, not harder

This is an age-old saying but efficiency is key to managing workload and maintaining wellbeing. By working smarter, not harder, teachers can optimise their efforts and preserve valuable energy for meaningful teaching experiences.

Remember, you cannot be consistently and sustainably impactful in the classroom if you are suffering from burn-out.

- Find time management and prioritisation techniques that work for you such as the Pomodoro Technique, 52:17 or the Eisenhower Matrix (search online for these).
- Ensure that you are making the most of resources that already exist within your school through shared planning and resourcing.
- Consider how you can utilise artificial intelligence designed specifically for teachers to reduce your workload in areas such as planning and resource creation.
- Avoid the temptation to multitask, which can lead to decreased productivity and increased stress levels.

> *"While empathy is a cornerstone of effective teaching, it's crucial to strike a balance between compassion for others and self-care. Constantly prioritising other people's needs over one's own can lead to emotional exhaustion and burn-out"*

5, Plan ahead for potential flashpoints

Anticipating and addressing potential challenges is essential for managing stress and maintaining wellbeing throughout the school year.

Proactive planning and preparation can significantly reduce stress levels, develop your sense of autonomy, and increase wellbeing (Huijser et al, 2021).

- At the start of the term, identify days that are going to add extra challenges, e.g. parent consultations, residentials, education visits or open evenings. Think about how you will prepare and mitigate for that extra pressure, such as through lessons that involve less intensive marking.
- If you have an evening where you need to attend a twilight session, consider how you will make up for any missed micro-habits.

6, Know your own limits

While empathy is a cornerstone of effective teaching, it's crucial to strike a balance between compassion for others and self-care. Constantly prioritising other people's needs over one's own can lead to emotional exhaustion and burn-out.

- Practise being honest. If taking on a new task would lead to you feeling overwhelmed, it is okay to say no!

7, Accept the things you can't change

In the constantly changing environment of education, teachers often encounter systemic issues or organisational constraints that are beyond their control. It is essential to recognise that not every challenge can be solved or every situation changed.

- Practice acceptance of the things you cannot change and focus your energy on what you can influence within your own classroom or lessons.

8, The power of your professional networks

The value of supportive networks cannot be overstated. Connecting with fellow educators, mentors, alumni, and professional organisations can offer invaluable support and resources for navigating the challenges of teaching.

Strong social connections and support networks are associated with increased resilience and wellbeing. By actively engaging with your professional networks, you gain access to diverse perspectives, practical advice, and emotional support.

Remember, you are not alone in your journey as an educator, and reaching out to others can strengthen your resilience and enhance your overall wellbeing.

- Find out about professional networks that you are interested in and that you would like to join, such as alumni from your teacher training provider, ECT networks via your local authority or multi-academy trust, and other networks such as Diverse Educators and #WomenEd.

Final thoughts

Thriving as an ECT is synonymous with a commitment to prioritising your wellbeing. By implementing evidence-based strategies and seeking support when needed, you can cultivate a foundation of resilience and adopt strategies that will sustain you throughout your teaching journey. Remember, prioritising wellbeing is not a luxury, but a necessity. SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *Education Support: Counselling support available 24/7 on 08000 562 561 24. Visit **www.educationsupport.org.uk***
- *Fitz et al: Batching smartphone notifications can improve wellbeing, Computers in Human Behavior (101), 2019.*
- *Huijser, Taatgen & van Vugt: The art of planning ahead: When do we prepare for the future and when is it effective? Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition (47,5), 2021.*
- *SecEd: Another year and another 40,000 teachers quit the chalkface, 2024: **https://buff.ly/3KIOUMJ***
- *Wen et al: Minimum amount of physical activity for reduced mortality and extended life expectancy, The Lancet (378), 2011.*

Making marking work

Marking and feedback can be a driver of workload and burn-out. So what practices and habits must ECTs develop now to support their students while also protecting themselves?

Debbie Tremble

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As a teacher for more than 20 years, I have marked a lot of student work. An eye-watering amount in fact – I am an English teacher.

By quick calculation, I would guess I have marked around 33,000 pieces of work in my time, not accounting for years of exam marking too. So, I know marking and the workload it brings.

In 2015, the government's Workload Challenge cited marking as one of the most burdensome tasks for teachers and warned that some policies and associated marking practices create unnecessary work that doesn't always have a positive impact on outcomes for students.

A subsequent research review from the Education Endowment Foundation (Elliot et al, 2016) and a report from the government's Teacher Workload Review Group – *Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking* (DfE, 2016) – offered a number of practical, evidence-based insights. And the recent Workload Reduction Taskforce has just recommended that we revisit the Teacher Workload Review Group report.

For ECTs, the prospect of marking can be daunting, especially when faced with the pressure to provide extensive written feedback. However, it's crucial to remember that effective marking doesn't have to be an overwhelming burden.

As the Teacher Workload Review Group report states: "Marking practice that does not have the desired impact on student outcomes is a time-wasting burden for teachers that has to stop."

A word on deep marking

The Teacher Workload Review Group also pushed back against the practice of extensive written comments on every piece of work and instead urged teachers to ensure that marking is "meaningful, manageable, and motivating".

It pays particular attention to "deep marking", a generic term used to describe a process whereby teachers provide written feedback to students, who are then expected to respond in writing, which in turn is verified by the teacher.

The practice is often based on the assumption that it offers a more comprehensive way to give feedback, reflects a stronger sense of professional ethics, and enhances student performance. However, it can be disjointed from the learning process rather than responding to student needs. The report concludes that focusing on quality not quantity is better. It adds: "Too often, it is the marking itself which is being monitored and commented on by leaders rather than student outcomes and progress as a result of quality feedback."

Incorrect assumptions about Ofsted requirements have led to a growth in deep marking. However, the current Education Inspection Framework makes clear: "We will not: use work scrutiny to evaluate teachers or specify the frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback."

So what is Ofsted looking for? The framework wants to see teachers who "check learners' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback". It adds: "In doing so, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary, without unnecessarily elaborate or differentiated approaches."

So the question for every ECT getting to grips with their marking workload is how can this be achieved without burning ourselves out and developing unhealthy working practices?

By embracing the ideas and principles below, you can develop a sustainable and impactful approach to marking that supports student progress while prioritising your wellbeing.

The purpose of feedback

Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest effective feedback should address three questions:

1. Where am I going? (e.g. What are the goals?)
2. How am I doing? (e.g. What progress is being made toward the goal?)
3. Where to next? (e.g. What activities need to be undertaken to make progress?)

The purpose should always be to improve the learner in some capacity. The EEF review (Elliot et al, 2016) recommends that feedback should be given on the task, subject, and on self-regulation. For example:

- Task: Is work correct or incorrect? Is the answer right or wrong? This builds surface-level knowledge essential for deeper learning.
- Subject: On key substantive and disciplinary knowledge/skills.
- Self-regulation: How well is the student planning, monitoring and evaluating their work? How well are they taking control of their learning behaviour? Do they know what strategies to use in particular contexts?

So, where does marking feature in this model and how does it ensure useful feedback? The EEF study is helpful in this regard, reviewing as it does different approaches to marking and their workload implications. Let's see what it has to say...

1, Grading

Issue: Many marking policies require teachers to give a grade to indicate performance and formative comments.

What does the review say?
Awarding grades without comments does not promote student progress. Grades alongside comments has mixed outcomes. Studies even suggest that grades can detract from the effectiveness of formative comments by drawing attention away from the feedback.

Workload: Comment-only marking could reduce workload. Further research focusing on the effectiveness of comment-only marking with occasional grading, would be useful.

2, Corrections

Issue: Should teachers correct mistakes? Providing students with the correct answer may seem logical, but it could limit their ability to learn from mistakes. An alternative is to encourage students to correct their own errors by guiding them to the solution.

Evidence: Most research distinguishes between "mistakes" – things we usually do correctly – and "errors" stemming from a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. Providing the correct answer to a mistake may not be as effective as allowing students to work it out themselves.

Workload: Requiring students to correct mistakes could encourage deeper learning and retention while easing workload. However, addressing errors requires more guidance and may increase workload. Using codes (such as "sp" for spelling) can save time.

3, Thoroughness

Issues: Marking thoroughness varies from ticks and brief praise to detailed corrections of errors. Some policies promote thorough marking, especially in literacy, while others suggest focusing on task-related feedback or selective marking, where only a portion of the error is highlighted.

Evidence: The research shows little benefit from "acknowledgment marking" – or tick and flick. Detailed feedback guiding improvement is more effective than generic praise or ticks.

Workload: The focus should shift to meaningful feedback that guides improvement. The mantra "mark less, but mark better" guides teachers to focus on meaningful, improvement-oriented feedback.

4, Student responses

Issue: Should students have designated time in lessons to reflect on marking, often called dedicated improvement reflection time (DIRT) or "feedback and response". At what point in extended pieces of work should students be given written feedback?

Evidence: The evidence is limited but suggests that students often find it challenging to engage with feedback, suggesting a need for dedicated class time to reflect on marking. Students who receive feedback during a project are more likely to engage with it and find it useful – a case for providing classroom time for students to reflect on marking.

Workload: Setting aside class time for students to reflect on feedback should not add to teachers' marking workload. If class time is dedicated to feedback and reflection, it could lower workload by making marking more efficient. Without this in-class time, teachers' out-of-class marking efforts might not be fully effective.

5, Creating a dialogue

Issue: Workload-heavy approaches include "triple impact marking", where teachers provide a written response to student responses, and "dialogic marking", which develops a written "conversation" between teachers and students over time.

Evidence: There are a limited number of studies on dialogic marking. There is no research comparing the impact of written dialogue to verbal dialogue and no evidence shows why written dialogue would be superior.

Workload: Dialogic and triple impact marking lead to significant additional workload. The research is not clear that any potential gains justify the extra effort.

6, Targets

Issue: Formative assessment aims to help learners improve their performance by providing explicit targets during marking. Commonly, schools use statements like "even better if..." after "what went well", or a "wish" after "two stars". These targets can also be used as success criteria for future assignments.

Evidence: Research is limited but broader studies highlight the importance of specific feedback in improving performance. Effective feedback is precise; vague feedback unhelpful. Clear success criteria are associated with improved performance, suggesting that setting specific targets in marking, and revisiting them before similar tasks, could be effective. Short-term targets with a small number of goals tend to be more effective. Involving students in setting their own targets (or rewriting them in their own words) may enhance understanding and engagement.

Workload: Creating tailored targets for each student increases time needed for marking. A potential solution is using codes or pre-printed targets on labels. Generic targets, however, may undermine the precision required for effective feedback.

7, Frequency and speed

Issue: Is it better to provide quick but less detailed feedback, or slower, more thorough comments?

Evidence: No studies on this question were found but professional opinion suggests that frequent, quicker feedback might lead to faster improvement.

Workload: More research is needed on this question.

Feedback vs workload

Our goal is to check learners' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately, and provide clear, direct feedback. But to balance effective feedback with reasonable workload, how can we make feedback manageable, meaningful and motivating? I'll leave you with some ideas:

- Show me boards/mini-whiteboards: Allows for instant feedback and checking for common errors. Feedback is given verbally.
- Use a visualiser to mark a student's work, this is modelled to the class who can then check their own answers/responses.
- Comparative marking: Read the responses and place them in order from best to worst. Decide what mark the best one gets and then award marks from this starting point (for more, see @mrbwteach on X).
- Build in self-checking time for common errors.
- Hinge questions, multiple-choice and gap-fill questions (be sure to check them).
- Marking templates that give precise feedback (also used for self/peer-assessments).
- Whole-class feedback sharply focused on "where are we?" and "where do we go next?".
- Coded marking with a focus on students understanding their strengths while giving them strategies to improve work.

Key takeaways

Quality over quantity: Focusing on meaningful, precise feedback is more effective than extensive marking. This approach reduces workload while providing clear guidance for improvement.

Engagement with feedback: Encourage student reflection and interaction with feedback to enhance learning outcomes. Designate class time for reflection, self and peer-assessment to promote deeper engagement.

Strategies for efficiency: Use targeted approaches, such as coded marking, pre-printed feedback and visualisers, to streamline marking. SecEd

FURTHER INFORMATION

- *DfE: Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking, Teacher Workload Review Group, 2016:* ***https://buff.ly/3yzAGe1***
- *Elliot et al: A marked improvement? EEF, 2016:* ***https://buff.ly/3WOVkkO***
- *Hattie & Timperley: The power of feedback, Review of Educational Research (77, 1), 2007:* ***https://buff.ly/3wy0EOL***

Ten habits to embed in your lesson planning from day one

One of the secrets to hitting the ground running as a new teacher is adopting effective routines in your lesson planning and teaching practice. Here are 10 to get you going

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Practice does not make perfect, it makes permanent. Whatever you practise to the point of automaticity, you make habitual and can do without active thought. This reduces cognitive load and frees up precious working memory capacity which can then be put to better use. So, what are the 10 most impactful routines that you can embed in your daily practice to help lighten the cognitive load?

1, Think backwards

You should have a laser-like clarity about the knowledge and skills you expect students to have learned by the end of each lesson and you should plan backwards from there.

If you can't articulate what you want students to know and do at the end of each lesson, then it's unlikely that students will know what is expected of them.

Ask yourself: What do I want students to know and do at the end of this lesson that they didn't know and couldn't do at the beginning?

Then: What do I need students to think about during this lesson in order for them to process and encode these knowledge and skills? How will you know if students have acquired these knowledge and skills?

Check in regularly with students to ensure they know what they are learning, why, and how that learning will be used and assessed later.

2, The bigger picture

Look at each lesson not in isolation, but as one piece in a jigsaw. There needs to be a logic to the order and organisation of lessons so that what you teach today builds upon and extends what you taught yesterday and is built upon and extended by what you teach tomorrow. Over time, there needs to be increasing challenge.

In practice, each lesson needs to provide opportunities for students to activate their prior knowledge and then add to it, forging ever more complex schema in their long-term memory.

Sequencing in this way also allows you to articulate that bigger picture to students which, in turn, helps build intrinsic motivation. It also ensures that students have the requisite knowledge to be able to understand new concepts – because we all process new abstract information within the context of what is already concrete and familiar.

Ask yourself: What are the end-points of my curriculum? This could be a scheme of work, a unit or topic, a year or key stage, or an entire phase of education. What matters is that you know what you want students to know and do at the end of the sequence.

3, Think high...

... and teach to the top. This involves teaching the same ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum to all students, and having high expectations of what all students can learn – avoiding the temptation to "dumb down" because of their starting points or additional and different needs.

Thinking high also involves teaching a curriculum that is sufficiently broad so as to prepare students for what comes next but to teach it with appropriate depth so as to ensure genuine understanding and aid transferability.

Thinking high is about making sure all students, not just the higher-performing ones, are stretched and challenged – both in terms of the pace and pitch of teaching and in the feedback given. One great strategy to employ to this end is peer-teaching. If the students who have "got it" teach those who have not, then the "got its" are meaningfully engaged in retrieval practice and deepen their understanding of a concept by explaining it to someone else, while the others are retaught a concept from a new angle.

Ask yourself: What does excellence look like? What standard of work should I expect from the highest performing students? How can I model excellence and deconstruct it so that all students can see how to produce work of a high standard? How can I maintain the integrity of my teaching sequence without holding some students back or allowing others to flounder?

4, Think out loud

First, start each new teaching sequence – whether that be a new concept, unit, or topic – with clear and insightful explanations. The best explanations are chunked into small steps, make use of analogies and metaphors to compare new, abstract information to what is already familiar to students, and are dual-coded, combining verbal and visual information to aid students' cognition.

Starting a new topic with teacher explanations enables you to take ownership of the information and ensures students do not waste too much time gathering information or developing unhelpful misunderstandings.

Second, you should model excellence and, while doing so, make your invisible thought processes and decision-making visible to students, thus ensuring your implicit expertise is explicit.

Third, you should engage the class in co-construction, producing a model together. Students provide the substance while you ask probing questions, drip-feed technical vocabulary, and pass the baton between students so they can comment on and add to each other's contributions. You should also use questioning to engage students and provide on-going formative feedback.

Fourth, students should produce a model independently – so as to engage in the cognitive process by themselves – and gather and act on feedback.

Ask yourself: What key information do I need students to know upfront? What vocabulary do I need them to possess? How can I share this in an accessible way without overloading students' working memories? How can I model excellence live in front of students? What steps will I demonstrate and how I will narrate my progress? How can I model metacognition and show students how I deal with setbacks and improve my work?

5, Think differently

Plan a variety of learning activities for students to engage in over time – with teacher explanations and modelling "chunked" with questioning, practice activities, or group discussions which aid students' retention and increase their attention spans.

Each lesson does not necessarily need to be varied, but over a sequence of connected lessons, there should be opportunities for students to become increasingly independent and to engage in activities which allow them to own their learning.

Pair work, group work, whole-class discussions, self and peer-assessment, and suchlike, are all great ways of ensuring students are active participants in the process of learning, not just passive recipients of information.

The trick is to gradually hand ownership of learning to students by starting a new teaching sequence with the greatest level of control and slowly passing the reins to students as they complete tasks for and by themselves.

6, Think repeatedly

Plan opportunities for students to engage in some form of retrieval practice – and thus the building of schema – in every lesson. The shape and form of this retrieval practice and when it happens within the lesson is dependent on the context. Pragmatism is key, but retrieval practice needs to take place frequently to prevent knowledge decay and to help students connect prior learning to new learning.

Thinking repeatedly is about engaging students in activities that require them to activate prior learning then add to it in order to spin ever-more complex webs of knowledge in long-term memory. These mental maps – or schema – help students to think more efficiently and effectively.

Retrieval practice does not have to be convoluted, nor does it have to involve lots of planning. One impactful form is "free recall", whereby you greet students at the door and give each of them a blank piece of paper. When they sit down, the task is to write down everything they can remember from the previous lesson. You might use this to unpack prior learning and to unmask any misconceptions, but you don't necessarily have to do anything. The simple act of students retrieving things from long-term memory and writing them down is good enough.

7, Think equitably

Teach all students the same curriculum, thus ensuring equality, but make sure that those students with additional and different needs are supported to access that curriculum through adaptive teaching strategies, thus ensuring equity.

Thinking equitably is about giving those who start with less more help to access the same curriculum as their peers. The "more" might take the form of task-scaffolding whereby students are given more detailed instructions, additional information such as a word bank, worked examples, or partially completed tasks (perhaps stem sentences) in order to help them get started.

The key is that any additional scaffolding you put in place falls away as quickly as possible, ensuring students become increasingly independent.

8, Think forward

As well as knowing the bigger picture of learning, students need to know how, when, and why they will be assessed and how prior learning will be activated and built upon. Students should only be assessed when that assessment will lead to feedback, and feedback should only be given when there is time given in lesson for them to process, question, and act upon it.

The results of assessments should then be used as learning opportunities – for example, in the form of whole-class feedback on the most common errors – rather than simply to draw lines in the sand. In other words, feedback should be formative with actionable next steps. The best feedback offers both feedback and "feed-forward": it tells students where they are now, where they were, and what they need to do to make further progress.

9, Think habitually

Habits are key to helping new teachers develop automaticity and thus to reducing cognitive load. The more student habits we can establish, the lower the demand on working memory will be and thus the more able students will be to rise to the challenge of hard work.

Think: What do I want all students to do every lesson? Whatever can be standardised and practised to the point of automaticity, should be.

As a starting point, I'd suggest you practise how students enter your classroom, how you start lessons, how resources are handed out and returned, how students engage in class discussions (hands-up, no hands-up, active listening, commenting on what others say not how they say it or who they are, etc), how students self and peer-assess and peer-teach, how students respond to feedback, how students try to overcome difficulties by using coping strategies and wall displays etc before seeking help from you, and so on.

You might also think about the social norms you want to establish in your classroom and the rewards and sanctions you apply when students do or do not confirm to those norms – working within the confines of your school's policies, of course.

Time spent practising daily routines at the start of the year or term will pay dividends later because you won't have to repeat instructions or tackle low-level disruption/non-compliance.

10, Think and feel

The final classroom routine is perhaps the hardest to teach but the most important: showing warmth towards students and visibly caring about their success – something you'll find is rewarded with their loyalty and hard work.

Warmth isn't about being fluffy and soft, it involves having high expectations of students, both academically and in terms of their attitudes to learning, and explicitly teaching students the study skills they need to access your curriculum, engage with it, and make progress.

Showing warmth is also about listening to and understanding students, empathising with them, but not tolerating anything less than their best. SecEd

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