

# New to teaching

The magazine for trainee teachers from the National Education Union



WWW.NEU.ORG.UK  
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## My first day

National Education Union members describe their first time in a classroom and how they have progressed

**AMY:** "I started my placement at the end of September and it was a sink or swim scenario. I remember having the most terrible nerves. I was so scared of forgetting my 'speech', and I had cue cards, but couldn't read them, as my hands were shaking so much. I used to feel so anxious before classes, to the point of feeling sick. I would doubt myself, and was always surprised when I got such good observation grades.



"I have just finished my second year in employment and things are totally different. I am a well-respected member of staff with additional responsibilities, and I really feel part of the team. I have developed my skills and attributes to suit the role and, as a result, I am doing really well. My advice to anyone new to the profession would be

to stick with it. There have been days and weeks when I wanted to pack it all in (there still are from time to time), however, I am so glad I stuck with it."

**NARDIA:** "Even though I had taught dance to children in the past, it felt totally different standing at the front of a classroom with 30 teenagers staring back. The age gap between myself and the Year 10s I was teaching suddenly felt very small. I didn't have anything in my lesson plan to prompt teacher-student interactions! I was really concerned about building good



relationships while keeping professional boundaries.

"Now I really enjoy my key stage 4 lessons, as I have the privilege of being a role model for adult life and I can show them that imperfections are okay, even when you grow up."

## What is the National Education Union?

At the National Education Union, we're standing up for the future of education. We're committed to making it a great place to work, a great place to teach, and, crucially, a great place to learn. By championing everyone who works in education, we empower professionals to inspire generations of children and learners.

We believe that education enriches lives, and that's why we work to ensure schools and colleges sit at the heart of our communities, and education sits at the heart of our society. Together, we'll shape the future of education.

The National Education Union has been formed from two major education unions: the

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT), whose members voted overwhelmingly in March 2017 to amalgamate. The National Education Union officially formed on 1 September 2017 and there will be a period of transition until the two unions are fully amalgamated on 1 January 2019. During that period, members who joined after 1 September 2017 will have access to the benefits, advice, publications and learning opportunities of both the ATL and NUT sections. See [www.neu.org.uk](http://www.neu.org.uk) for more details.

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# Welcome to teaching...

... and congratulations on choosing what we hope will be a thoroughly rewarding and motivating career



The road ahead may appear a little daunting right now, but don't worry. By the time you finish your induction or probation year, you'll have all the skills, knowledge and confidence you need – whether it be in a primary, secondary or further education setting in the maintained or independent sector.

In the National Education Union, we want you to succeed, because we care

about teaching and the young people in your care. With the ever-increasing demands on teachers, it has become more and more important to have a collective voice. Successive Governments have played with education and our conditions of employment for far too long. With your help, we will be able to influence policy before it is cast in stone. See page 6 for ways of doing this.

We hope you find the National Education Union's publications and support useful in your first steps into teaching. We wish you a successful and rewarding training, and look forward to supporting you throughout your career. ◆

**Mary Busted**  
**Kevin Courtney**  
Joint general secretaries,  
National Education Union

## Competition

You can win one of five copies of *Feedback* by Isabella Wallace and Leah Kirkman, which explores one of the most powerful tools for enhancing learning. It brings together ideas from leading international thinkers to provide practical strategies for busy teachers. For details of how to enter, see [www.neu.org.uk/competition](http://www.neu.org.uk/competition).

## NEU advice and publications



As a trainee member, you also have access to a series of downloadable factsheets and hard copy advice guides. Here are just some of the publications you can access free as a member of the National Education Union. See [www.teachers.org.uk/members-reps/new-teachers](http://www.teachers.org.uk/members-reps/new-teachers) and [www.atl.org.uk/tmqzone](http://www.atl.org.uk/tmqzone) for more details. If you're not yet a member, you can join online at [www.neu.org.uk/join](http://www.neu.org.uk/join).

## Your professional development

As a member of the National Education Union, you have access to a range of local and regional continuing professional development (CPD) courses. Sessions typically cover issues ranging from classroom management skills and strategies for inclusive teaching to mindfulness and well-being to safeguarding, dyslexia and dyscalculia.

You'll be contacted about the courses on offer to you once you've signed up as a member.

If you're not yet a member, you can join online at [www.neu.org.uk/join](http://www.neu.org.uk/join).



# Challenging behaviour

Trainer and behaviour expert **Paul Dix** offers new teachers tips on managing their classroom



Paul Dix demonstrates behaviour control

**BEHAVIOUR IS ONE** of the major causes of stress for all teachers. There is a myth that simply because you have good materials, you can automatically engage children. This may be true for an experienced teacher, but for new teachers there are many other factors that affect a lesson.

You do not need to be able to stand up in front of a class within a week of starting and speak for half an hour, without a whisper from the class. Every experienced teacher has gone through the same process, and none of them achieved it in a week. It can take months; it's a 'drip, drip, drip' process, rather than grabbing a few strategies and implementing a 'magic bullet' solution.

Think about the culture you are trying to develop. Your relationship is the key. Praise may not work for you in the first couple of months because

you don't know the children and they don't know you, so triangulate praise through other people while they get to know you, such as their form tutor.

Choose one goal at a time – there may be a million behaviours you want to change, but you won't be able to change them all at once. Focus on a learning attitude and put this on the wall – a 'praise board' or 'recognition board' can be particularly useful for tackling low-level disruption. It could also be marbles in a jar, stickers – any

**“It's not personal. They're just trying to work you out”**

way of recognising positive behaviour. Go for high expectations, talk about 'solutions', 'curiosity', 'resilience', 'perseverance', and 'courage'.

Don't say 'bring a pen', 'look at me', 'put your bag at the side of the room' – these are functional behaviours; set the expectation much higher. Always add a name to the board for doing the right thing, never for the wrong thing, and when you get to 50 names, celebrate with applause.

Demonstrate a division between dealing with difficult issues privately and celebrating behaviour as a whole. It should not be about divide and rule – 'you're lovely, you get a sticker', but 'you're nasty, you get a detention'; it's about one class heading in one direction. Personal contact, relationships and praise collectively send good messages.

There are people around you who will support you, but take a little time to work out which teachers the children genuinely respect and love so you can get some advice from them. Ask them for help and advice – seek them out, they won't seek you out.

Apart from that, it's back to basics. Meet and greet; catch students doing the right thing; set tight boundaries; don't jump the sanction steps – go up the ladder slowly and always try to persuade a change in behaviour first. If you do have a nasty incident, remember it's not personal. They're just trying to work you out – it's normal, expect it. It's the same for every teacher, it happens to us all.

Another idea is to write a couple of names on the board at the beginning of a lesson.

They'll often ask why, and you can say 'you came in, you put your bag under your desk, you had your eyes on me, you showed real respect', and instantly there'll be another voice saying 'can you put my name on the board, Sir, I'm doing it as well'. This behaviour will become irresistible, and will snowball and become part of the culture. There will come a point where low-level disruption disappears, not because your students fear the stick, but because they feel the pull of the carrot.”

**Paul Dix** is managing director and lead trainer of Pivotal Education, which delivers some of the National Education Union's CPD programme – [www.pivotaleducation.com](http://www.pivotaleducation.com).

The National Education Union provides detailed advice on behaviour, including NEU-ATL's *Managing Challenging Behaviour* publication and the NEU-NUT guide *Managing Behaviour*, plus a series of online behaviour tips. As a member of the National Education Union you can access both, as well as a wide range of continuing professional development and training opportunities. The union regularly runs courses on behaviour management.

➔ For more information about publications and courses, along with the other support on offer to members, visit [www.neu.org.uk](http://www.neu.org.uk).

# Making the most of your mentor

Setting the ground rules for the mentoring relationship at the outset can prevent problems arising



**YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH** your mentor is crucial for the first steps into your career, but our research among trainee and NQ members found the quality of mentoring is not consistent. Many reported approachable, flexible, easy-to-contact mentors who provide the right mix of support and autonomy, while others have been less fortunate.

"Mentoring has a different skill set from teaching; many mentors are capable teachers in their own classrooms, but find it challenging to articulate their practice to student teachers," explains Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, who has extensive experience running initial teacher training programmes. "There can be an

assumption that because someone is a good teacher they will automatically be a good mentor.

"A good mentor should elicit information from their mentee about their teaching, which encourages reflection," she adds. "Good mentoring is about empowering, not about solving a person's problems for them."

Here are three important things to remember when establishing a relationship with your new mentor:

**1** **Setting ground rules on how the mentorship will work from the outset helps to reduce the possibility of problems arising.**

Post-lesson feedback can be an area of tension, as it is

often easier to focus more on criticisms than compliments. Agreeing a format – three compliments, three examples and two development points, for example – will help keep feedback balanced. Remember that it is part of the mentor's role to offer criticism, so try not to be defensive when it is given.

**"Good mentoring is about empowering, not solving a person's problems"**

**2** **Regular meetings may involve reviewing your targets to see if they have been met, discussing your successes and concerns with your mentor and looking at how you prepare for lessons.**

If you find you are being set targets that are not followed up, then you should raise the issue with your mentor. "Keeping a record of your mentoring experience, what has been agreed, how many times you meet, etc, is a good idea, so if a problem does crop up you have substantiation for your concerns," says Mary.

**3** **If you find you aren't getting what you feel you need from your mentor then don't be tempted to let the situation drift and hope problems will resolve themselves.**

In most cases, tackling problems early can prevent them escalating. It's also important to think carefully about how you raise an initial concern – you want it to lead to a positive outcome. "Tone and timing are key," Mary says. "And, as a mentee, you should also ask if there is anything you could be doing differently."

Your starting point for advice is your course tutor, who will most likely have encountered the issues you are raising before. "As a mentee, you need to take ownership and be quite assertive," says Mary. "If you are feeling uncertain, always seek advice from your tutor. The mentoring you receive is a vital part of your training, so it is very important to make sure you get the most out of it." ◆

➔ To download NEU-ATL's *Guide to Mentoring*, go to [www.atl.org.uk/mentoring](http://www.atl.org.uk/mentoring). Hard copies are also available free to NEU members. If you're not yet a member, you can join online at [www.neu.org.uk/join](http://www.neu.org.uk/join).

# Get to grips with workload

Members of the National Education Union who were in your position just a year or two ago offer their top tips for keeping on top of it all



## REACH OUT

- Ask for help – especially in your first few weeks – from everyone!
- Work collaboratively with colleagues and share planning where possible.
- Use union CPD, teachmeets and conferences to learn from others and share experiences, and for support.
- Talk to colleagues and adapt your practice to what is manageable for you.
- Social media can be good for sharing and for support (for guidance on social media use, see page 7).
- Talk to your colleagues about their working hours and how they manage.
- Encourage leadership to explore ways to reduce workload together. This can be done as a wider staff action through the National Education Union's workload campaign (see right).

## TIME TIPS

- Set up email folders and notifications to manage emails more efficiently.

- Don't be afraid to ask more experienced teachers to share their resources.
- Decide what needs to be marked and how deeply – not everything needs to be.
- Organise your tasks with time limits – use your phone to time tasks. Do not spend more time on a task than allocated.
- Focus on the tasks that will make the greatest impact on children and their learning, not those that please others.

## THE CLASSROOM

- Have a table where pupils can place books for marking, open on the right page.
- If a learner can do a job, or students can mark each other's books, then allow them to take ownership.

## WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- Take steps to keep your work and life separate.
- You are allowed to say no to additional responsibilities or expectations if you're feeling overwhelmed.

- Learn to prioritise your workload carefully – balance the needs of pupils, tracking, targets and marking.
- Write a to-do list. If it is too long, ask your line manager or mentor to help you prioritise and reduce it.
- Shadow more experienced teachers to see how they manage their workload.
- Include some free time and periods in your diary to relax.
- Setting aside time to do weekly exercise can help to reduce stress.
- Have the confidence to ask why something needs to be done.
- Try to focus on solutions.

## REMEMBER TO ASK

- Why am I doing this?
- Does it need to be done?
- What is the impact on children's learning?

## WHAT ABOUT UNION SUPPORT?

- Talk to colleagues to find out if there are shared

concerns that need to be taken up with school leaders.

- Talk to your school rep about issues that should be discussed in that way.
- The National Education Union will support members who collectively wish to challenge unnecessary workload in their school.

Your first point of contact for advice and support from the union is your workplace representative. If there is no representative in your workplace, for advice and assistance call **0345 811 8111**.

→ For more in-depth advice on workload and details on how you can help the National Education Union to change things for the better, visit [www.neu.org.uk/workload](http://www.neu.org.uk/workload).

Be aware, the Government and Ofsted have also produced guidance on workload, with the Department for Education now recommending "sparing use of more detailed marking and written feedback".



## Taking on teaching

Raphael Heath, member of the National Education Union, and winner of awards for his use of technology in the classroom, offers advice on getting through the early days of teaching

**YOU NEED TO** work out what is motivating you. At first, when it's all new, it's physical, it's demanding, it's emotional. Your motivation needs to be solid, sound and clear. If you're motivated by finishing at three and having long holidays, you will probably be disappointed. If you see the importance and value of working with young people and contributing to their lives in a positive way, giving them opportunities – this can keep you going. And it reminds you, amid all the pressure, this is what it's about at the end of the day.

After that, it comes down to personal reflection on your own qualities. Go into it with

your eyes open. Speak to teachers. Understand what the job involves; that personal strength and resilience all teachers need to deal with the gruelling demands of the day-in, day-out cycle. It's very pacey in teaching. You need to understand what you need to do to do the job well, but also be able to look after yourself.

The other thing is being organised and planning. The treadmill happens and there is always an element of surviving hand to mouth, but ultimately the more you do in advance, the more you set yourself up to be in control of things. The daily surprises and challenges you face can then be taken on.

**“You need to understand what you need to do to do the job well, but also be able to look after yourself”**

### GETTING INVOLVED

## Get to know your union reps

James explains how getting involved in the union has made a real difference to his entry to the profession

“Teaching has been exactly what I expected, both exhausting and hugely rewarding. Like many NQs, I have found behaviour management difficult. I can't seem to get it right. On Monday I will be too lenient, on Tuesday too strict. Despite this, and the constant fatigue, I'm enjoying it. The cliché is real: the best thing has to be the kids.

“When I decided to become a teacher, I also quickly decided I wanted to become active in my union. Alongside my year group colleagues, it has been my union reps who have been most helpful. I've tried to find time to get involved in the union and have attended several events, including a social for NQs and a London-wide

meeting of young teachers. Each time, I've met people who share my concerns about what is happening to our schools and our children, including experienced teachers who have been happy to share advice. Without the union, my first few weeks in the profession would not have been the same. ♦



## Getting active in your union

The National Education Union has lots of opportunities for new teachers to get involved, including local and regional training, and events where you can network with peers from around the UK, influence policy, campaign for education, develop your professional practice and represent the views of those new to the profession. There are sector conferences for teachers and support staff, independent sector and post-16 sector members, and a summer school for new professionals.

➔ If you're not yet a member, you can join online at [www.neu.org.uk/join](http://www.neu.org.uk/join).



# Staying safe on social media

How to have an active social media presence, while remaining professional

**FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM** have changed how we communicate, but it's important to remember that careers have been wrecked over an ill-judged post on social media. Follow these tips and you won't go too far wrong.

## 1 Check and act in accordance with the IT policy

Even if you do not like the restrictions it may place around social media use, act in accordance with your school's (and later on, your employer's) IT policy, and make sure you keep up to date with any changes to it.

## 2 Never have pupils, parents of pupils or ex-pupils as friends on Facebook and other sites

Keep your personal and professional life separate. If you don't, you are leaving yourself vulnerable to allegations of inappropriate contact, as well as possible complaints about posts relating to your personal life. You are entitled to a private life, but if you make your private life public, there could be consequences.

## 3 Have the strongest privacy settings possible - but be aware 'friends' may not have the same level of privacy

Comments, photos and videos can quickly become public. We advise you never to include your place of work as part of any social media profile.

## 4 Be aware of who your 'friends' are

Casual acquaintances could add a photo or comment to your Facebook page that could land you in trouble. Colleagues who are friends may take offence at something you posted, take a screenshot and pass it to management. If you want to use Facebook for social purposes, only add trusted friends - if you are not friends with a colleague in real life, why be a friend on Facebook?

## 5 Think about your username and email address

Sites like Twitter and Instagram will often ask you for a username and most email accounts allow you to choose your email address, while your actual name is often still visible. Think about this carefully - does your username/email address reveal something quite personal, is it embarrassing or could it be deemed offensive?

## 6 If in doubt, don't post it

You hold a professional position within the community, and few careers have the same level of interaction with children and young people. Therefore, your behaviour and online presence is going to be the subject of greater scrutiny. Always think carefully about what you are posting, whether a photo or text - and if in doubt, don't post it. ♦

**“Never have pupils, parents of pupils or ex-pupils as friends on Facebook and other sites”**

➔ The factsheet *Social Networking Sites: how to protect yourself on the internet* is available at [www.atl.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.atl.org.uk/factsheets).