SUE COWLEY

HOW TO SURVIVE YOUR FIRST YEAR IN TEACHING

2nd Edition

'I cannot say enough how much I personally love this book.' Amazon Review
How to Survive Your First Year in Teaching
(Second edition)
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How to Survive Your First Year in Teaching

(Second edition)

SUE COWLEY
This book is dedicated to all the teachers, students and loved ones who helped me succeed in, survive and enjoy my first teaching job.
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Preface to the New Edition

I’m delighted to be updating the first book I ever wrote – even all these years on, my memories of my own NQT year are vivid and rather magical. Some of the friendships that I made in my first school survive to this day, even though we have all moved on a great deal since then (and gained a fair few wrinkles/pounds/offspring in the intervening years). Some of the older teachers I worked with are long since retired, or have sadly moved on to that great staffroom in the sky. Some of the younger teachers I worked with are now in senior management roles, a few even making it to the dizzy heights of headship. Occasionally a student from my early days gets in touch to tell me about how he or she is progressing in the adult world. How lucky you are to be taking your own first steps on that same wonderful journey.

In this brand new edition of How to Survive your First Year in Teaching you’ll find lots of tips and suggestions that I have collected since I first wrote the book. Some of these are ideas I picked up as I moved on to work in different kinds of schools, with different types of students, in new kinds of situations. Others I have learned about through my work with trainees, teachers and support staff in schools and colleges around the UK. All the time on my travels, I am picking up valuable suggestions for making life in the classroom better and easier for teachers and their students. I’ve crammed as many of these strategies as I can fit into this new edition.

Although I’ve freshened things up and brought the book up to date, what I haven’t done is completely rewrite it, because I wanted to retain the essential flavour of how it felt to be newly qualified. The excitement and apprehension of setting foot in the classroom as a ‘proper’ teacher for the very first time. The ins and outs of the working life of a teacher – all the ups and downs, the sheer reality of what the job involves.

Things change all the time in teaching, particularly where they concern newly qualified teachers. Since I originally qualified, a vast number of new initiatives and acronyms have come into play (TAs, GTC, GTP, QTS, DCFS to name just a few); similarly today’s NQTs are expected to jump far more hurdles than I ever had to. Because of the
continuously changing nature of the profession, there is not a great deal of time-sensitive material in this new edition. If you want to delve more deeply into the technical aspects of qualifying as a teacher, there are many books that you might read on the subject, including my own *Guerilla Guide to Teaching*.

I do hope this book helps you as you set out on the same journey that I made all those years ago. It’s a fantastic trip, and it will take you to places that you could never have imagined. It will be tough, it will be fun, it will be stressful, it will be joyful. But one thing is for sure: it will never ever be dull.

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You’ve worked long and hard to qualify as a teacher; after some form filling and nerve-racking interviews you’ve found yourself a job; now it’s time to put it all into practice. But how ready do you feel to stand in front of a class and teach? And how do you deal with all the other aspects of a teaching job? Somehow, that’s something they forgot to tell you at college. Well, that’s what this book is designed to show you.

When I started teaching I was amazed to find out how inefficient schools can be: how much time is wasted on inessential tasks; how disciplined you have to be to spend your time effectively; how inadequate systems and ineffective management can add heaps of stress to your working life. I was also surprised to discover that a few simple but effective strategies could make a huge difference to my chances of success. Many of these tips were picked up from experienced teachers; others I simply worked out for myself. All of the strategies I used are outlined in this book.

As a teacher you are your own boss, and this is one of the joys of the profession. But the job will expand to meet the amount of time you are willing to devote to it. You must develop self-discipline and time management skills to avoid working until midnight every night. There are so many things about teaching that are learnt on the job, during that challenging first couple of years. You have to find ways to deal with problem students and awkward parents; decide how much time you can afford to spend on marking; and develop a teaching style that works for you and your students. This book will assist you in your quest to become the best teacher you can possibly be, by helping you deal with these issues, and many more.

I can remember feeling at sea during my first year of teaching, adrift without any certainties to anchor on to, drowning in a sea of paperwork. This book contains answers to all the questions I had and gives you realistic guidance in overcoming the obstacles that stand in your way. This is not an academic textbook based on years of painstaking research. It is full of common-sense advice, based on my own experiences in schools, and all that I have learnt from other,
inspirational teachers. I have combined practical tips and suggestions with examples (sometimes light-hearted) to help you as you start out on your teaching career.

These days, there are many different routes into teaching. This book is aimed at all those who are just starting out in the profession, whether you’re a newly qualified teacher, on the graduate training programme (GTP), a school-centred training course, or a trainee teacher on a PGCE or similar qualification.

I’ve been lucky enough to teach at both primary and secondary levels, in the UK and also overseas. I am constantly surprised at how similar students are, whatever their age and wherever they live: so many of the techniques I used with 3-year-olds are applicable to 18-year-olds as well; so many of the challenges that face the primary teacher are the same for teachers in the secondary sector. This book is aimed at all teachers, whatever age group and wherever you teach.

I’d like to wish you luck in your prospective profession – you have chosen one of the most varied, interesting and rewarding jobs it is possible to find. You have also chosen a career that is exhausting, incredibly hard work and that may sometimes reduce you to tears. The thing about teaching, though, is that you can make a real difference to your children’s lives. And at some point in the future they may look back and remember you as a key figure in their lives. What other job could offer such a wonderful reward?
Getting Started
Much of the time, teaching is a wonderful and fulfilling job. There will be moments during your first year, though, when it feels more like a case of day-to-day survival. There's a very steep learning curve during your first few years as a teacher, but hold on to the thought that it does get easier with time and experience. Once you are established within the profession, and have spent a year or so at your school, everything will start to slot into place. This first chapter will help you survive through the tricky early part of your career, and especially during your first year as a teacher.

**Before you start**

The months and weeks before you start your first teaching job are an exciting but nervous time. Your mind will probably be full of a combination of questions that you want answered, ideas about lessons you could do with your children and worries about issues like managing behaviour and coping with stress. Here are a few quick tips to help you cope with the waiting period before your first teaching job begins:

- *Go easy on the planning:* Try not to succumb to the overwhelming temptation to spend the whole summer planning loads of wonderful and exciting schemes of work. Although you may believe that you are saving yourself time, any detailed or in-depth planning done at this stage is fairly pointless. Until you meet your students and get to know them a little, it is hard to anticipate their needs and interests. It is also likely that much of your teaching will be based on schemes of work or textbooks already in use at your school. If you get the chance to visit your school before you start work, ask about any planning that could be done in advance.
Stock up on the fun stuff: It can be a good idea to hunt around for some cheap or free bits and bobs that will be useful either in your teaching or as part of your reward system. I'm not suggesting that you spend huge amounts on expensive resources, but keep an eye out for giveaways, promotional offers, and in charity shops. Some of the very best resources are completely free – an empty bird's nest, a skeleton leaf. Scan the internet too for interesting ideas and useful links.

Try to fit in a visit: If possible, it's a great idea to visit your new school during the summer term. Although you will have been shown around on the day of the interview, you were probably feeling too tense to take much in. If no one offers you the chance to visit, contact the school and ask whether it would be possible. During your visit, spend time looking at your classroom and considering whether you'd like to rearrange the furniture. If possible, ask to meet some of your students, as this will give you a 'feel' for what they are going to be like to teach.

Arrange a meeting with important people: During your visit it's useful to have a quick chat with those people who are going to be important during your induction year. Accept that this might not be possible, or that it might simply be a quick 'hello/goodbye' – schools are very busy places. Your list of 'important people' might include:

- your induction mentor;
- the teacher of the year group you will be teaching (primary);
- the teacher of the class you will be teaching (primary);
- any TAs (teaching assistants) or support staff you will be working with;
- your head of department or faculty (secondary);
- your head of house or year group (secondary);
- the SENCo (Special educational needs co-ordinator).

Make the most of your holiday: The best advice of all is to take a long and relaxing holiday before you plunge into the stressful world of the full-time teacher. Whether your finances will be up to this is another matter.

The first day

In reality you will have two 'first' days. There will be one or more in-service training (INSET) days before the children return to school; this
will be followed by the actual start of term, when the students arrive back.

The INSET day
Your first INSET day may feel a bit intimidating. The staff will be gathered in the staffroom, chatting away to each other, discussing all the exciting things they did over the summer. You will probably only know a couple of people from the day of your interview. Here are some ideas and tips to help you get through the day with the minimum of stress and the maximum of enjoyment:

◆ Don't dress too smartly: It is highly unlikely that the staff will dress smartly on the training day. In most cases it is acceptable to dress casually, although if you feel uncomfortable doing this you could wear 'smart casual' clothing. The discomfort of being in a suit when everyone else is in jeans is something you could do without at this stage.

◆ Be prepared for meetings: Training days are typically full of meetings. Your day might start with a full staff meeting, at which the head will welcome everyone back, explain any promotions that have taken place and introduce the new teachers (including you). There could be various administrative and whole-school issues to deal with, for instance if your school is due for an inspection or is bringing in some new policies. In a secondary school you may have to attend a departmental or pastoral meeting.

◆ Be prepared for admin: There will also be lots of administration tasks to do – sorting books and resources, labelling books, checking deliveries and so on. These tasks can eat up a surprisingly large amount of time.

◆ Use preparation time wisely: If you are allocated preparation time, this gives you the perfect opportunity to get to know other members of your department or teachers working in the classrooms close to your own. Take care with first impressions: even if you are the most confident individual in the world, it is worth keeping quiet at this stage to avoid making the wrong impression.

◆ Start to collect resources: An INSET day is the perfect time to collect the various papers and resources you will need during your first few weeks. These include:
  ◆ a 'teacher's planner' (if your school uses them);
  ◆ the finalized copy of your timetable;
your class list or lists;
+ details of any children in your class with special educational needs;
+ copies of schemes of work and syllabuses;
+ copies of whole-school policies – particularly the behaviour policy;
+ resources for rewards and sanctions systems (merit stamp, certificates, etc.);
+ sets of books or textbooks you will be teaching;
+ materials for artwork and displays;
+ exercise books and paper;
+ stationery such as paper clips, staplers and staples, sellotape, etc.;
+ tutor group diaries and timetables in the secondary school.
Aim to collect your resources as soon as possible, so that you are prepared for when the students arrive. Exercise books and paper can be like gold dust at the start of term, especially if orders have not been delivered.

Don't get too organized too soon: When you receive that pile of key papers on the INSET day, it is very tempting to start organizing them immediately: sticking your timetable and class lists into your planner, writing out your first week's lessons, and so on. It is best to avoid this temptation. The first week of school never runs quite according to the timetable – for instance on the first day back the students may have assemblies and extra registration or tutor time. Class lists, too, are often subject to change when new children join the school or others do not turn up. Keep all your important papers in a folder to deal with at a later stage.

Personalize your room: Some secondary schools have problems with a lack of space, and teachers are forced to move around from classroom to classroom for different lessons. Most teachers, though, will get a room of their own. Spend some time stamping your personality on your room before the students arrive. This helps give the impression that it is your territory, and that you are well prepared and well organized. You could:
+ put a 'Welcome' sign with your name on your door;
+ add interesting posters to the walls, or put up some key word displays;
+ create a chart or display for your rewards and sanctions system;
+ rearrange the seating if you think it would work better in another configuration;
◆ organize and label trays or drawers (and add pictures if you’re working with young children);
◆ sift through the drawer in your desk and clear out the debris left by last year’s class teacher.
◆ Get your bearings: One of the biggest difficulties you will face at first is finding your way around the school buildings, especially in a large secondary. Aim to spend some time walking around the place, preferably with someone who is familiar with the school. Make sure you know the location of:
  ◆ the school office;
  ◆ the student reception;
  ◆ the head’s office;
  ◆ the deputy head’s office;
  ◆ the offices of senior staff, e.g. assistant headteachers, heads of year;
  ◆ photocopying machines;
  ◆ the assembly hall;
  ◆ the canteen;
  ◆ the staffroom;
  ◆ the student toilets;
  ◆ the staff toilets.

The first lesson
So here it is at last, the moment you’ve been waiting for. Your stomach feels like lead, you’re convinced you are going to be sick and your mouth is as dry as the Sahara desert. Even experienced teachers find the start of term difficult; how on earth are you supposed to deal with it?

You’ll find lots of hints on managing behaviour and learning in Chapters 3 and 4. At this point I’d like to offer you a few brief thoughts and tips to help get you through this nerve-racking experience:

◆ You are ‘the mystery teacher’: No one knows who you are yet. Your children may suspect that you are inexperienced, but unless you tell them, or give that impression, they have no way of knowing for sure. At the moment you are an unknown quantity and consequently you have an air of mystery that you can exploit. If a student asks ‘Are you a new teacher, Miss/Sir?’ you might answer, ‘I’m new to this school.’ Aim to cultivate the sense that you have a wealth of experience behind you, teaching or otherwise. No matter how inexperienced you are, the students will always be younger and less experienced.
‘They’re more scared of you . . .’: You know the old saying about spiders and snakes: ‘They’re more scared of you than you are of them.’ This saying also holds true for your children. Most students will give you a window of opportunity in which to prove yourself; a few lessons during which they are checking you out, unsure about how far they can push you.

Just as when you are dealing with a nervous animal, the key is to appear relaxed. If you look calm, confident and in control of yourself, the children will probably behave perfectly well for you. If you get flustered, defensive or aggressive, they may strike out in self-defence.

Have a sense of style: Think carefully about your teaching style before your first lesson. The old cliché contains a lot of truth: ‘Start off as hard as possible – you can always relax, but you can never get a class back once you’ve lost them.’ You are not their friend, mother/father figure or counsellor, you are their teacher. Your students will expect and indeed want a certain degree of formality from you. I’m not suggesting that you scare the living daylights out of them, but be as firm as you can. Once you gain more experience and get to know your children during the year, you may be able to relax. If you start soft you are laying down trouble for yourself in the future. Honestly.

While we’re on the subject of clichés, let’s deal with that other favourite adage: 'Don’t smile before Christmas.' I disagree with this one – there is absolutely no harm in smiling at your children – indeed, it’s an important indicator that you are relaxed and in control. Just make sure it’s an ‘I’m in charge’ kind of smile, rather than an ‘I’ll roll over and do whatever you want’ one.

Set the boundaries now: In the first lesson, the name of the game is boundary setting: this is what I expect from you, this is why I expect it, this is what will happen if you do or do not follow the rules. Your boundaries should be fair, realistic and achievable, focusing on positive rather than negative behaviour. Once you’ve set your boundaries, you are going to have to stick to them like glue. Talk to the class about what you want and why you want it, and if appropriate encourage them to respond to your ideas. If you set clear boundaries and stick to them, the children will feel secure about how they should behave. If you fail to set clear boundaries, or if you constantly move the goalposts, the students will keep messing you around until they see how far they can push you.

Your school will have a set of classroom rules as part of its
behaviour policy – use these as your starting point. School rules work brilliantly so long as they are realistic, appropriate to the students, and applied consistently by all staff. Problems can arise, though, if staff are inconsistent in applying the rules, if the rules are too vague, or if they are hopelessly unrealistic for dealing with really disaffected or confrontational students.

To a degree, the way that you set and maintain boundaries is a matter of personal taste – it’s about establishing your teaching style. It will also depend on the age and type of students you are working with – the way that you set boundaries will vary if you’re working with Year 1 or Year 6, or with Year 7 or Year 11. After a while you will work out how best to establish your expectations with different classes. In Chapter 3 you’ll find some examples of boundaries, sanctions and rewards you could set for a class in the first lesson.

◆ Wait for them: I cover this idea in more detail later on, but it bears repeating a million times. It is certainly never more important than in your first meeting with the students. Even the proverbial ‘class from hell’ should hopefully listen to you the first time they meet you. If you set the standard now, they will know what you expect. Keep this maxim in mind: never, ever talk to a class until every single student is sitting still, in complete silence, looking directly at you. The seconds of waiting can seem like hours at first, but set this pattern of behaviour now and I promise you that you won’t regret it. Even if you find it difficult to remember all the ideas in this book, keep this one thought in mind when you start out on your teaching career.

There are a couple of very good reasons why it’s so important to ‘wait for them’. First, it allows the teacher to get on with teaching, and the children to get on with learning. As well as insisting that the students listen in silence to you, ask that they listen in silence to each other – it’s only right and respectful. Secondly, you need to be aware of what will happen if you don’t wait for complete silence. At first you might only be talking over low-level chatter, from one or two students, but it’s a slippery slope – after a while you will find it impossible to get anyone to listen.

In some really challenging schools, you may have difficulty gaining the class’s attention, even in the first lesson. If this happens, don’t panic. Have some back-up strategies in your mind that you can use if the children won’t listen. In Chapter 3 you’ll
find lots of suggestions for what to do if getting silent attention is tricky to achieve.

- **Hands up!:** A big irritant in the classroom is children calling out their answers when you ask a question. Get them into good habits right from the word go, by starting every question with the phrase, ‘Put your hand up if you can tell me …’. After a while you will have trained the children to respond to every question by raising their hands.

- **Relax:** As difficult as it may sound, it is important for your own sake and for that of the children not to rush your first lessons. Try to relax and never worry if there are brief pauses while you are considering what you want to do next. If your mind does go blank, look around the class with a confident air, making eye contact with some individuals. After a while it will all come more easily, honest.

- **Admin, admin, admin, names:** There will be lots of administrative tasks to complete in the first lessons with any class. Checking registers, explaining rules, giving out books and so on will take lots of time. Don’t feel that you have to rush into delivering the curriculum. Have a key focus of learning the students’ names, perhaps by playing some name games with the class.

- **Use the register:** I’ve always found taking the register is a good way to start lessons in the secondary school, because it helps to settle the class down. In a primary class it is of course a vital task at the beginning of the day. If you’re a secondary teacher, get into the habit of taking the register in every lesson you teach – when you come to write reports, you need to know about student attendance levels. The register can also be used to check who owes homework and keep an eye on any students who might be late to lessons or truanting from them.

- **Who wants a job?:** Whenever you have anything to be given out or collected in, ask this question of the class. You will find that your students are delighted to help you (especially the younger ones) and you will save yourself unnecessary work. You can even use the offer of a job as a reward for keen students.

- **Stand behind your chairs:** This may sound like a rather minor matter to be worried about when you have a million other difficulties to contend with. However, I promise you it is a worthwhile (and very simple) strategy that helps you control your class and also saves you time and effort. At the end of the lesson or the day, just before the bell goes, ask your children to stand behind their chairs (or place the chairs on desks) and wait to be dismissed. You then have
the students’ attention for giving out any instructions or reminders, you can walk around and check that there is no litter on the floor, and you have saved yourself the job of pushing in the chairs. Once you have set this pattern, you will find that the students stand behind their chairs automatically.

An extension of this idea is to turn the exercise into a ‘game’ for younger children. Tell them that they are being ‘tested’ on how quietly they can stand behind their chairs. This makes the end of the lesson nice and restful for you, as it avoids scraping chairs (and much quieter for the teacher of the class below you if you are on the first floor). A further extension is to tell the children they must freeze like statues until the bell goes, giving out rewards for this to encourage them.

The first week

By the end of the first week you will hopefully be finding your feet. If you are a primary teacher, you know your children reasonably well by this stage. If you work at secondary level, you should have faced each of your classes at least once. You will also have an idea of what your timetable is like and the structure of your days. At this stage, there are a few things that you can do to prepare yourself for the weeks and months to come:

◆ **Get an overview:** Aim to get a sense of the balance of your days and weeks. Perhaps your mornings are a very intensive time in terms of teacher input, with literacy and numeracy lessons in the primary school. At secondary level, there may be days when all your classes are difficult to control, but other days when you teach only well-behaved Year 7 students.

◆ **Plan for a balanced approach:** When you’ve gained this overview of your week, try and account for it in your planning. Don’t plan whole days of lessons that require lots of teacher input and talking, as this will put a strain on your voice. If you do have to face a series of classes where the students are difficult, try to incorporate some lessons that lessen the stress, for instance visiting the library or watching a video.

◆ **Keep an eye on your marking load:** Some subjects, topics or lessons will create huge piles of marking, while others will mean a relatively light marking load. Aim to achieve a balance in your
marking as well as in your planning. Keep an eye on the type of tasks you are setting and don’t set too much work that requires detailed marking at any one time. Incorporate plenty of oral, practical and student-led activities, as these are generally less time consuming to assess.

Developing support systems

Whatever job you do it is important to have someone to turn to for help: a shoulder to cry on when things are going wrong; someone to ask when you need advice or information; people to support you if others question your approaches. In teaching these support systems are absolutely vital. Teaching is a very difficult job and you will be put in situations where you are challenged in many different ways: physically, emotionally, psychologically and even legally.

Start thinking about developing your support systems as soon as possible, preferably before you have to use them. Support systems come in a variety of forms – which one you turn to will depend on the type of problem you are experiencing. Here are some suggestions:

◆ Your teaching colleagues: You may find that there are surprisingly few opportunities for you to meet with other teachers, particularly if you are working in a large school. While you might have some contact with those who work in classrooms close by, or with other members of a secondary school department, the majority of each day will be spent with your students. Although it can seem a lot of hassle to get to the staffroom, it really is worth making the effort. Not only will you get the chance to chat with other teachers, but you will also give yourself a break from the children.

As soon as possible, get involved in any social activities that are taking place (a staff game of football or netball, going out for a drink). One of the best resources in any school is its staff and their experience. Your teaching colleagues can give you many things: advice, information, schemes of work, a chance to moan or cry on a sympathetic shoulder.

◆ Your induction mentor: As a newly qualified teacher you will be given an induction tutor or mentor – an experienced teacher who will guide you through your first year, watching you at work, assessing your progress, and checking to see whether you meet the induction standards. Your mentor should become a vital part of
your support system, particularly if you find that you get on well together. More information about induction can be found in Chapter 12.

- **Support staff:** There are a range of back-up staff who play a vital part in supporting teachers. You might have the help of a TA or an LSA, the services of a technician, or the assistance of a special needs teacher in your lessons. Make some time early on to sit down with your support staff to discuss how best you can work together, drawing on the experience and expertise of those people who work with and alongside you. These staff can offer you invaluable assistance in developing your own planning and teaching to suit the children.

- **Your head of department:** In the secondary school, the head of department or faculty is responsible for all the members of staff in a particular area. This person will have responsibility for what is taught and how it is delivered. He or she will also deal with any parent or student comments (good or bad) about your work. It is an excellent idea, both on a professional and a personal level, to develop a good working relationship with your head of department. An effective head of department will support you in times of need and will also help you to develop your career.

- **Non-teaching members of staff:** There are a lot of people working in schools who are not part of the teaching staff: caretakers, receptionists, secretaries, bursars, photocopying assistants and so on. These people can support you in many different ways, so take the time to get to know them. They might help you in arranging a trip; moving furniture at short notice; accessing computerized information; typing letters, and so on.

- **Teaching unions:** While there is no compulsion for teachers to join a union, there are many advantages in doing so, and a union can form a vital part of your support system. An important advantage of belonging to a union is the technical advice and support on legal and contractual issues that they offer. With all the stresses of starting work as a teacher, it is very helpful to gain straightforward advice on such matters. As a new member of staff you may feel uncomfortable approaching a more senior teacher with these questions; a union representative can offer you non-partisan advice. Most of the unions offer some type of discount for membership in the NQT year.
The first term: September to December

Your first term at school will be a busy and exciting time. As you get to know the students and find your way around the buildings you will start to grow in confidence. Half-term will seem to arrive very quickly and your workload may even seem manageable. This term is full of fun and excitement in the build-up to Christmas: there will probably be lots of events going on and you should really be able to enjoy yourself. There are, however, a few factors to be aware of at this stage:

- **Overconfidence:** Take care that you don’t become overconfident and consequently relax with your classes too early. Your students may be responding well to the boundaries that you have set, but if you allow your standards to slip they could quickly lapse into poor behaviour. An air of overexcitement can develop as the winter holiday arrives. Remember, though, that you will have to face your children again after Christmas. Come January the end of the school year suddenly seems very far away and teachers often feel tired and overstretched.

- **Extra activities:** Be careful about getting involved with lots of extra activities: the Christmas concert, the school play, working parties, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and so on. It is very tempting when you start teaching to join in anything and everything to make a good impression. More experienced members of staff will have learnt how to refuse excessive demands on their time. You might find it hard to refuse if someone asks you to help out. Ensure that teaching and learning remain your top priority.

- **Illness/exhaustion/stress:** You want to keep going, to prove to your school that you are a reliable, hard-working employee. So, when you catch flu you muddle through and then you wonder why you can’t shift the succession of colds that follow. Teachers are notorious for going to work when they should be at home in bed with a Lemsip. ‘My classes need me’, they say, ‘I’ll only have twice as much work to do when I get back.’ A lot of teachers keep going and going and then every holiday, without fail, they fall ill.

A few points for you to think about: are you really so irreplaceable that the school cannot do without you for one or two days? Do you really want to pass on the flu to all the other staff? And isn’t it better to take a day off now and then when you need it, rather than two weeks off when you finally realize that you just can’t keep going any longer?
When you need to take time off sick, make sure you follow the school policy on absence. This will probably involve phoning the school to notify them that you will be away, the reason for your absence, and your likely return date. You may have to phone in for each day you are sick. You will need to set work, and you may have to ‘sign in’ on the day you return to school, registering your return with the office.

**Evaluation:** As an NQT your progress will be officially evaluated and some of your lessons will be appraised. Chapter 12 provides more information about the induction process. Get into the habit of doing self-evaluations, either formally or informally. This is one of the best, quickest and most readily available ways of improving your teaching. If one of your lessons goes particularly well, take a few minutes to think about what made it good, so that you can repeat your success in the future. Similarly, if you use a strategy that doesn’t work, or if you get into a confrontation, think about why the problem occurred and whether you could stop it happening again in the future.

The second term: January to April

Any teacher will tell you that the second term of the school year is the hardest. The days are cold and dark, with limited hours of daylight. The staff are tired and run down, and waves of illness spread through the school like wildfire, hitting teachers and children. Spring and summer seem an age away and the rest of the school year stretches ahead of you like a prison sentence. You have the mother of all hangovers from Christmas and the New Year. The paperwork is starting to pile up and you’re wondering whether you made the wrong career choice. Here are a few tips for getting through your second term as an NQT:

- **Plan a half-term holiday:** An excellent way of beating the second term blues is to go on holiday in the February half-term. Don’t take any work with you, escape somewhere relaxing and warm, and impress your students by sending them an exotic postcard. If you stay at home, try not to work all through the break. Plan a series of fun days out to pamper and reinvigorate yourself.

- **Reclaim your spare time:** If you got involved in extra-curricular activities during the first term (for instance the Christmas play), you should find that you get your evenings back now. Although
you might use spare time after school for work, far better to devote it to yourself instead, for instance by taking up a physical or creative activity.

- **Experiment!**: Now is a good time to take a few risks in your lessons; to plan a few unusual activities and see how they work. By this stage, you should hopefully have developed a good relationship with your children. Although I would still warn against relaxing too early, there should certainly be the opportunity to experiment a little in your lesson content and delivery.

### The third term: May to July

At last! The end of your first year is in sight. The third term always comes as a relief and is often a very enjoyable time. Examinations will be taking place, and some secondary students might be on study leave, giving you some free lessons. Although your marking load could become quite heavy, you will be amazed at how the word 'exam' turns your children into silent and hard-working young people. Here are some thoughts and tips for the summer term:

- **Enjoy it**: Now is the time to relax and enjoy your teaching. By this stage your relationship with your students will be clear: you will know who needs firm handling, and which situations need a bit more leeway. In the summer term you can start to relax your approach a little and enjoy your teaching and your children much more.

- **Use your time wisely**: It is rare to have any spare time in teaching, so if you do get some lessons off, think carefully about how best to use them. Sometimes, simply sitting and chatting in the staffroom is the most positive use of a free hour. Perhaps doing filing and paperwork will give you a sense of achievement.

- **Look for the best**: One of the key ingredients of a successful teacher is the ability to remain positive – to see the best in every child. A lot of schools have their sports day during the summer term, and it can be very enlightening to see some of your most difficult students achieving excellent results on the sports field. Keep an eye open during this term for different types of achievement.

- **Beware of the weather**: A word of warning about the summer term: hot weather can create a sense of lethargy, both in you and in your students. It's up to you whether you decide to crack the whip, or spend lots of lessons outdoors.
Planning as a student and planning as a teacher are two very different things. The same applies to planning for an observation, and planning for your day-to-day teaching. In each case, the former is at least partly for show, while the latter is about what actually works in your classroom. The difficulty during your first year as a teacher is working out how to plan in a way that is helpful for you and your students, but not too time consuming. Planning, just like teaching and marking, is a very individual process. What works for one person may be completely unusable for another. In your first year you will probably err on the side of caution, and plan in more detail than is strictly necessary. These detailed plans will not be wasted, though, as you should be able to reuse them in future years. This chapter gives you lots of thoughts, hints and tips about how to start developing your own style of planning, one that really is effective for you.

What is good planning?

Essentially, planning is only effective if it actually works for the individual teacher within his or her classroom. The most vital component of a good plan is that it leads to a high-quality lesson, in which effective learning takes place. It could be that the children do not actually learn what was originally intended by the teacher in his or her plan, but that the learning outcomes are nevertheless very good. The tips below will give you some guidance about creating good plans:

◆ *Find a balance:* Aim to achieve a sense of balance in your planning. This balance is perhaps one of the hardest things for new teachers to find, and it can take a good couple of years before you feel you have got it right. Balance comes in two forms: there should be a balance in your working life between the time spent on planning
and on other important parts of the job; there should also be a balance of activities within the lessons themselves. You can find more ideas about balanced lesson planning in the section below.

- **Don’t spend too much time on it:** If only it were as easy to follow this piece of advice as it is to say it! First, you need to work out what constitutes ‘too much time’ from your perspective. Your first year will be busy, and your top priority should be what goes on in the classroom. Planning is a key part of this, and you will need to devote a fair amount of time to getting lesson plans right. The secret is not to go overboard or plan in excessive or superfluous detail.

- **Make it work for you:** A plan is only useful if you can actually use it during the lesson. This is why too much detail can actually be a bad thing – if you find it impossible to refer to the plan quickly and easily, it will tend to stultify rather than aid your teaching. At the same time, your plan must give sufficient detail to make you feel confident about teaching the lesson.

- **Make it reusable:** At the opposite end of the scale from those teachers who plan in excessive detail are those who write down a few vague ideas moments before entering the classroom (and I do confess to having taken this approach on more than one occasion). With more experience, you may find that you can get away with this approach. At this stage in your career, though, it’s best to ensure that your plans have enough detail to be reused at a later date.

- **Make it engaging:** To my mind, one of the most vital qualities of a good teacher is that he or she is able to engage the children in what they are learning. A large part of this engagement is to do with planning appropriate, interesting, imaginative and creative tasks for your students. Although we are constrained somewhat by the demands of the curriculum, we should still strive to make our lessons as exciting and engaging as possible.

- **Make it work for your induction tutor:** Spend some time early on in the year talking through planning with your mentor. He or she will be able to advise you about how to plan, and also what is required during your observed and formally assessed lessons. It’s likely that you will have to plan in some detail for observed lessons, including information about special needs, differentiation, and so on.

- **Fit your plans to statutory requirements:** You will have many wonderful and imaginative ideas for lessons, but remember to check whether they fit into the relevant statutory frameworks:
Balanced lesson planning

Achieving a balance in your plans is vital for successful lessons, but it is tricky to achieve. With practice, you will find that you can instinctively sense what is balanced and what is not. However, experience will only come by making mistakes and by being willing to experiment with more unusual ideas and approaches. Balance essentially means that your lessons should include a variety of strategies to keep everyone interested. A range of tasks will also mean you appeal to the different ways that your students like to learn. Finding a good balance will also encourage your students to behave well. Here are some of my top tips for achieving a good balance in your lessons:

◆ **Put yourself in the children's shoes:** When planning, ask yourself how you would feel if you were presented with the activities you have in mind. There’s a big difference between being asked to read a textbook in silence for an hour and being given 10 minutes’ reading time before discussing what you have discovered.

◆ **Make use of time limits:** Set a time limit for each task to ensure that the students stay focused and work to their maximum capacity. Time limits give a sense of forward momentum to a lesson and keep the children on task. Experiment with different time limits to see how your children respond; perhaps two or three minutes for a quick discussion activity or five to ten minutes for something more complicated.

◆ **Limit teacher talk:** The temptation to lecture your class is strong, but it’s something that should on the whole be avoided. A good rule of thumb is not to talk to a primary class for more than the children’s age plus two minutes. Talk for much more than about ten minutes to students of any age, and it’s likely that they will start to drift off.

◆ **Maximize student activity:** Keeping your students active will ensure that they stay involved in the lesson, and will also discourage low-level misbehaviour. Look for hands-on, kinaesthetic-style activities. If you do have to talk to the class for a longer period, give the
students something to do while you talk (make notes, draw a mind map, doodle).

A balance of activities
There are many possibilities for different approaches to teaching and learning. Although some of the activities below are traditionally associated with particular subject areas, it can often be great fun to make more unusual cross-connections (a graph in English, a poem in science). Be experimental – students often respond really well to the unexpected. The model balanced lesson plan below shows how you might put some of these approaches together.

Teaching strategies

Teacher based
◆ Teacher talks to the class
◆ Teacher gives instructions to the class
◆ Teacher discusses a topic, getting responses from the class
◆ Teacher asks questions of the students
◆ Teacher writes something on the board for the class to copy
◆ Teacher writes the students' ideas on the board for the class to copy

Student based
◆ Students follow instructions
◆ Students work in pairs or groups
◆ Students make group presentations to the class
◆ Students make individual presentations to the class
◆ Students brainstorm in a group to get ideas
◆ Students work individually, e.g. reading, writing, drawing
◆ Students write their ideas on the board
◆ Students ask questions of the teacher
◆ Students make a list of questions they would like to research and answer

Types of learning activities

Reading activities
◆ Individual reading
◆ Shared reading, e.g. whole class
◆ Reading for information
Memorizing facts, figures or vocabulary
Reading in pairs or groups
Speed or skim reading
Reading newspaper or magazine articles
Reading from textbooks
Reading on a computer screen
Reading each other’s work
Wordsearches and crosswords

Writing activities
Answering questions
Summarizing the main points of a text
Note taking
Writing reports
Writing essays
Imaginative writing — stories, poems
Factual/analytical writing

Drawing activities
Drawing diagrams
Drawing from life or photographs
Drawing from imagination or memory
Brainstorming
Mind mapping

Speaking and listening activities
Discussions
Explanations
Drama exercises
Role play and improvisations
Question and answer sessions
Quizzes
Oral presentations
Debates
Taping radio programmes on a topic
Listening to music

Physical and practical activities
Games and warm-ups
Individual skills work
Group exercises
Drawing, modelling and painting
Practical experiments
Designing, building and testing
Performances/demonstrations, e.g. dance, drama, science

A model balanced lesson plan
A balanced lesson plan of one hour might contain the strategies and activities given below. I have assumed an actual teaching time of 50 minutes, giving five minutes at the start of the lesson for the students to arrive/settle and five minutes at the end for clearing away. Although this lesson is for a writing-based subject, it could be adapted to fit a more practical area of the curriculum, for instance science or PE. This example is for a very straightforward lesson – once you’ve got the hang of balanced lessons you can play around with more experimental and practical approaches.

5 minutes — Quick starter activity on the desks for when the students arrive
   Student based, this helps to settle them ready for the lesson
5 minutes — Teacher introduces the aim and topic of the lesson
   Teacher talks, students listen
10 minutes — Students brainstorm ideas on the topic in their books
   Students find out for themselves what they already know
10 minutes — Ideas are correlated on the board and copied down
   This brings everyone's ideas together
15 minutes — Students do individual writing on the topic
   Focus on individual written work for a limited time
5 minutes — A couple of students read out their work
   Brief oral presentation to the class for a plenary

Balance for the student
As well as balancing the different strategies and activities used, you should also be aware of what you are asking the students to do during a lesson. Is there too much emphasis on silent reading or writing, which requires a high level of concentration from them? Is there a great deal of noisy activity going on, which may be disruptive for the quieter children (and other classes)? Again, put yourself in your students’ shoes and think about how the lesson will actually feel for them.

Occasionally, your students will want to do very little during the lesson and you should be aware of when and why this might happen, and what you might do about it. There is little point in forcing your
children to work in a particular way (e.g. writing in silence) if you are going to have to risk confrontation in order to do so, and if the work they produce is unlikely to be of any value. For instance, a class that you see last lesson on a Friday, who have just had an hour of PE on a really hot day, are unlikely to be in the right mood to work particularly hard. Don’t feel guilty about applying a little bit of flexibility at times like this.

**Balance for the teacher**

While taking your students’ needs into account, do not forget yourself. Ensure that there is a balance within the lesson for you – that you are not doing all the work or all the talking. When you first start teaching, your natural enthusiasm may encourage you to put huge amounts of energy into every lesson that you teach. It is only as the school year drags on, and your energy starts to run out, that you realize why it is so important to find balance for yourself within lessons. Here are some tips for doing this:

- **Don’t be too controlling:** As an NQT it can be tempting to overcontrol your lessons, by using lots of teacher input (the ‘chalk and talk’ style). The temptation is to lead from the front because this makes you feel more secure in managing behaviour. This can be a mistake, though, as teacher-led lessons will often lead to behaviour problems because the students are not doing all that much. Don’t be afraid to hand over the reins to your children. Often, the best learning will take place when the students are working in small groups or individually, with you standing back and helping out when it is needed.

- **Give yourself some time out:** Aim for at least one period of quiet, calm individual work in most lessons, preferably with the children working in silence. This will give you a rest from the noise created by a class of students. It will also free you up to go around and help any individuals who need extra attention.

- **Take a lesson off:** From time to time, you may need a lesson off: don’t feel bad about this. For some ideas about restful lessons have a look at ‘Lessons for the tired teacher’ in Chapter 4. Although the students may feel that they work really hard at school, it is the teacher who makes the majority of the effort in most classroom situations. Give yourself a break when you need it.
Short-term planning

Short-term planning is daily and weekly, and perhaps also half-termly, planning. These are the plans that you refer to for each lesson, which give you an outline of what you are going to teach. For some teachers these short-term plans will be very detailed, while for others they will only act as a brief reminder of what is to be covered. The tips below will help you when working on your own short-term planning:

◆ Balance your week: As well as balancing each individual lesson, try also to balance your week so that you are not planning too many teacher-intensive sessions in one day or on consecutive days. You will get tired towards the end of the week, so aim to factor in some restful work at this stage, particularly on Friday afternoons.

◆ Balance your marking: When you are looking at your overall plans for the week, try to create a kind of rota for marking, so that you cover each class or subject adequately. This will also ensure that all your marking does not come at once. Identify specific pieces of work or topic areas (to yourself and to the students) that will get more intensive marking. It can help to draw a brief overview of your week’s lessons to see how your marking load falls.

◆ Be flexible: If a topic or lesson is going particularly well, or is taking longer than anticipated, it might be appropriate to spend more time on it than you had originally planned. Allowing yourself this flexibility is important, because it lets you respond to the mood and the reactions of your children. Never feel that a plan is set in stone and cannot be adapted as necessary.

Long-term planning

Long-term planning means planning for an entire term or for the whole year. Your school or department may ask you to set out in advance what you intend to cover, but they will not expect you to stick rigidly to a long-term plan. Long-term planning offers a way of balancing resources within a department or school. For instance, if only one set of books is available for a particular topic, efficient long-term planning helps ensure that they are available at the appropriate time. Long-term planning also ensures that you cover all areas of the curriculum. Most schools will have ready-made schemes of work for you to use or adapt. If these are not offered – do ask! Here are some tips for effective long-term planning:
◆ **Be flexible:** Just as with short-term planning, flexibility is also crucial in your long-term plans. There are many variants in this type of planning, for instance a topic may take far less time than you had anticipated, or you may find that the students are particularly enjoying an area of a subject and you would like to spend more time on it. If you are going to dwell for longer than anticipated on a particular topic area, check that this will not have an impact on other teachers who may be waiting for the resources your children are using.

◆ **Plan for variety:** Aim to cover topics in a way that gives the students variety in their lessons. For instance, you could start by covering an area of your subject that necessitates a lot of individual work, and then follow this up with a group project. Similarly, a series of practical experiments or exercises could be followed by written review work.

◆ **Take an overview of the marking load:** Just as with short-term planning, take your marking load into consideration. You might plan to do some group discussion work just after a series of tests, or you could timetable in some practical activities at the end of a long written project. Aim to avoid having a huge pile of marking right at the end of term – you don’t want to spend your holidays doing it.

◆ **Know your syllabus:** If you are a secondary school teacher delivering a course at GCSE or AS/A level, you will have to cover all the areas in the syllabus. It is far better to finish early than to run out of time. If you have covered all the topics before the exams, you can always do some revision.

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**Planning short cuts**

During your training you will have been asked to give a large amount of detail in your planning. There are various reasons for this. When you first start teaching you are learning and experimenting and it is important for your tutors to see what you are doing and why. Although it might not have felt like it at the time, while you were training you will have had much more time to spend on planning lessons than you do now. Once you’re in a ‘real’ teaching job, you have almost a full timetable and a large administrative workload. Should you continue to plan in such detail? The short answer to this question is ‘no’. Find lots of ways to keep time spent on planning to a minimum,
because you need time for all the other parts of your role. Here are some time-saving tips and ideas to help you:

- **Use the school format**: If your school has a set format for lesson planning or schemes of work, this makes life easier for you. The amount of detail you include can vary according to what suits your needs.

- **Don't reinvent the wheel**: Teachers are notorious for redoing work that has already been done. If there are schemes of work already in existence, then use them as they are or with minor adaptations. Ask other teachers in your school or department for advice on lessons that work well for them in each particular topic area, or with specific age groups.

- **Reuse your material**: If you are a secondary school teacher, delivering the same material to more than one class, use the same lessons with each one. A quick word of warning – make some minor changes each time so that you don't become bored and stale in your lesson delivery.

- **Use the internet**: These days there are literally thousands of ready-made ideas, plans, schemes of work and resources online. The TES staffroom forums are also a great place for getting teaching tips and suggestions. Beware, though – searching online for the right plans can be a time-consuming process.

- **Use a computer**: If a basic outline format for planning is available, you will save a lot of time by filling this in on a computer. Many of the details will stay the same for a class from lesson to lesson (for instance any SEN information or details of children who need differentiated work).

- **Use a project**: In the first edition of this book, I said that projects are 'perhaps less fashionable than they used to be'. Funnily enough, since the original time of writing, cross-curricular projects have come right back into fashion! (This just shows how approaches in teaching are cyclical – if you wait long enough they do come back into favour.) I have had great success using projects with my students. Projects are useful for a variety of reasons:
  - They take up a number of lessons, which means less planning for you.
  - The activities in a project are typically very engaging for the students.
  - The tasks require independent learning and encourage the children to be self-motivated.
Less able students can access the work at an appropriate level.
More able or keen children can do extension activities outside lesson times.
The plan for project-based lessons can be brief and quick to prepare (for instance, a worksheet with a list of numbered tasks).

Planning engaging lessons

I feel very strongly that it is vital to engage children in what they are learning; to make them want to participate in lessons, rather than feeling that it is something that they are being forced to do. This is not to say that it is possible all the time – you must work out for yourself how much time and effort you are willing and able to put into this style of planning. But making your lessons engaging has many potential benefits:

- It makes the learning seem relevant and valuable.
- You should get good (or at least better) behaviour from your students.
- It shows the children that learning can be fun.
- Planning these lessons allows you to use your creative talents.
- It makes planning an imaginative and enjoyable experience.
- You can use engaging lessons as a reward for good work or behaviour.

It’s tempting to believe that older students will not react as well as their younger counterparts to unusual or creative lessons. In my experience, though, I have found that they welcome them with open arms. Of course, not every lesson needs to be some kind of extravaganza of multisensory wizardry. It’s about balance – some days you will only have the energy for a ‘the worksheets are on your desks’ kind of lesson, other days you will feel like doing a really special or unusual session with your children. Here are some general tips and hints about planning engaging lessons:

- Use props or objects: Children find something captivating about seeing a prop or object in the classroom that would not normally be there. For instance, the teacher who uses a ‘magic box’ to inspire a lesson on story writing.
Go multisensory: Most of the time, students mainly use the senses of sight, hearing and touch in their lessons. Finding ways to incorporate the senses of taste and smell as well will give them a much richer sensory experience. For instance, they might chop up ingredients to make a pizza as part of a division activity in maths.

Use fictional settings and scenarios: Making your classroom into somewhere different can be very engaging and inspiring for the children. I’m a drama teacher, though, and you may well be wondering how fictional settings or scenarios could apply to other areas of the curriculum. To give a couple of examples, a teacher delivering a lesson on bridges and spans might use a scenario in which the children work as engineers to find suitable materials to build a bridge across a shark-infested river. A teacher looking at the solar system might ask the class to play the role of astronauts, and set up a space ship (using rows of chairs) that then flies out through the solar system and past the different planets.

Make it topical: Lessons that are up to date, and which deal with issues of current interest to your children, will engage their interest and gain better motivation and behaviour. You might use the format of a popular television programme to deliver a lesson, for instance Deal or No Deal or Who Wants to be a Millionaire? You could take a story from the news and use it within a lesson.

Make it weird: When a teacher does something really strange it catches the students’ attention and makes them curious. One highly original lesson I’ve heard about is the one in which a science teacher urinates into a bottle, distils the results and then drinks it! You might not feel the urge to do anything quite that outrageous, but do try to incorporate some weird and unusual ideas occasionally when planning and delivering your lessons.

The teacher’s planner

Many schools give teachers a planner in which to keep all their bits and pieces. These offer a very useful way of keeping all your important information in one place. The planner is a small (A5 size) or large (A4 size) book similar to the teaching practice file you would have used during your training. The planner contains:

- a yearly calendar;
- a page for each day’s lesson planning;
◆ space for registers;
◆ a page to write out your timetable;
◆ various other sections for notes, orders, etc.

Teachers use these planners in a variety of ways: some fill them out religiously in advance for each day, giving lots of detail about the lessons they will be teaching; others use them in a more haphazard style, filling them out after lessons, perhaps as a reminder of what has been covered. It is useful to keep as much information as you possibly can in the planner, so it is all in one place and you can carry it around easily. For instance, if you are a secondary teacher, rather than using a mark book you could keep all your registers, seating plans and marks for each class in the same section of the planner. That way, after taking the register you can leave the planner open to refer to students' names, check who owes homework and so on. You could also write detentions on the daily planning page, where you can cross them off when they have been served.

When you receive your planner, wait a bit before filling in registers, as there will often be changes to class lists at the beginning of term. Rather than writing information out, it is easier and quicker to photocopy it to size and stick it in. Similarly, glue your school calendar in on the appropriate pages rather than spending valuable time writing it out. You will, of course, experiment to find your own way of using a planner. Whatever works best for you is what is right!
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II

You and Your Classroom
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Managing behaviour is the biggest concern for many new teachers; indeed, it's a worry for many experienced teachers as well. You will tend to make lots of mistakes in your first year – I know I did. But every time you make a mistake, you will learn from it and hopefully do things better next time around. At this point, you need to arm yourself with lots of practical strategies for managing behaviour, preferably before you enter the classroom. That way you will have a more successful, and less stressful, induction year.

Depending on the type of school where you teach, classroom control may pose little problem, or it may be the most vital part of your job. Even in the easiest of schools, where most students are keen to do what you ask, the importance of effective behaviour management should not be underestimated. In a school where the majority of students are well behaved, a relatively small number of students might still create problems for you. In more challenging schools, you could be faced with large numbers of children who simply will not do as you ask.

By following the suggestions in this chapter, even the most difficult classes should eventually become a little easier to handle. There is no magic wand, though, when it comes to managing behaviour. Do remember that next September, when you've got a year's experience under your belt, things will seem an awful lot simpler. At all times, aim to retain a sense of perspective – even when things are going disastrously wrong, remind yourself that there is a world outside the classroom walls. It really is not the end of the world when your students misbehave, even though it will probably feel like it at the time.

**What you need to know**

Before you set foot in the classroom, there are a number of things that you can find out that will help you manage behaviour effectively.
Spend some time, preferably before term starts, finding out and thinking about the following areas:

- **Your whole-school behaviour policy:** This should be your 'bible' when you start out as a teacher. Stick to the school policies and the students will view you as a teacher who knows what is what. Many behaviour policies operate some kind of warnings system, where the children have a number of opportunities to comply before a sanction is given. For instance, you might apply a verbal, then a written, warning, before giving a punishment. I was given a great tip in my own first year as a teacher – a deputy head said to me ‘blame the policy’. What he meant was, when you are handling misbehaviour, make it clear that you are simply following the school systems. This helps you depersonalize what might be a potentially tricky situation. For instance, you might say: *Darren, I see that you have chosen not to work. Now in clause 3, sub section ii of the school policy it says that students who refuse to work must be put in detention. Don't you think it would be a better idea just to get on with the task?*

- **The sanctions that are available:** Your school behaviour policy will say what sanctions are available for you to use, and the circumstances in which you might apply them. Before you face a class for the first time, make sure you know what the sanctions are and how seriously different types of misbehaviour are viewed. If you are clear about this, you will communicate your understanding to the class. If the students sense uncertainty, they will try you out to see how far they can push you. In the section below, you can find general information about misdemeanours and their likely consequences.

- **What to do if sanctions are not served:** As well as knowing what sanctions are available, you should also find out what happens if a student fails to serve a punishment. If a student misses a detention and you do not follow it up, you may as well not have bothered giving the punishment in the first place. Chasing recalcitrant students can take up a lot of time, but once the students realize that they cannot get away with avoiding the sanctions you give, your sanction-related workload will start to decrease.

- **What rewards are available:** In addition to finding out about the sanctions that are available, ensure that you discover what rewards you might use. Giving a reward is almost always a more effective path to good behaviour than giving a punishment. If
you can catch your children behaving well, and reward them for this, you will often find that misbehaving does not even occur to them. You will also create a much more positive atmosphere in your classroom.

◆ What to do in a crisis: Sadly, it is the case that in some schools there will be some children whose behaviour can become so out of control that there is no way for the teacher to deal with it alone. Find out what you should do if a crisis situation arises, and who will be there to support you in resolving the problem. For instance, your school might run a ‘red card’ system, whereby you send a trusted child to the office with a red card, indicating that you need help immediately from a senior member of staff. Bear in mind that the safety of the whole class is your responsibility – never feel guilty about needing to send for help.

◆ What your expectations are: As well as discovering how the systems at your school work, you will also need to think about your own standards and expectations. If you have a very clear idea about what you do and don’t expect from your children before you even meet them, this will help you in dealing with behaviour management. See ‘Setting the boundaries’ further on in this chapter for some more ideas about this.

**Types of misbehaviour**

As a teacher, you will come across a whole host of different kinds of misbehaviour. Some are the typical childish behaviours that any parent knows well; others are more serious and even shocking issues that affect modern-day schools. In the classroom it is sometimes the case that what starts as a fairly low-level situation will escalate into a full-blown incident. Learning how to avoid this is a key part of becoming an effective teacher.

You will find a list below of some of the kinds of misbehaviour you might encounter. I have listed these on a kind of ‘rising scale’ of seriousness. At this point, have a think about how you might react to and deal with each type of problem if and when it occurs in your classroom. Ask yourself:

◆ How will I feel if this happens?
◆ Will I be able to keep my cool?
◆ How am I likely to react?
What is the best way to react?
How serious do I consider this type of misbehaviour?
Does this behaviour require an instant sanction?
Do I know what my school policy says I should do?

Here are some of the misbehaviours that you might encounter:

- silliness;
- forgetting equipment;
- not doing homework;
- chewing gum;
- incorrect uniform;
- calling out;
- talking when the teacher is speaking;
- ‘blanking’ the teacher;
- cussing and name calling;
- throwing paper/equipment;
- swearing, but not at anyone;
- chatting repeatedly;
- refusal to complete work;
- refusal to stay in a seat;
- running around the room;
- running out of the room;
- complete refusal to comply with the teacher’s requests;
- fighting;
- serious swearing (at you);
- throwing dangerous objects, e.g. chairs.

Effective use of sanctions

Although sanctions are necessary for behaviour management, the ideal situation is to use them as little as possible. Let’s be honest – no one likes to be punished, especially by a stranger. At the start, when the pupils don’t know you very well, some of them may react in a very negative way to being sanctioned. That is not to say that you shouldn’t punish them, just that when you do have to use sanctions you need to do it as effectively as possible.

Aim to use a rising scale of interventions; something similar to the list given below will work well. Consider, too, whether an intervention is required at all – as you’ll see, the first few suggestions on the list
involve little or no intervention at all. You must use your professional judgement to decide whether calling attention to the misbehaviour is going to make the situation better or worse. As far as you can, stick to your school's behaviour policy to show that you are being fair and consistent. Some more serious misdemeanours will require an instant higher-level response; the situations where this might happen should be outlined in your behaviour policy.

When a child misbehaves, you might try:

- the 'tactical ignore' (i.e. saying/doing nothing – this is particularly effective with attention-seeking behaviour);
- praising another child in the vicinity for good behaviour;
- reminding the whole class about the rules;
- a pointed look;
- moving towards the pupil;
- a click of the fingers in the child's direction;
- a hand on the child's desk to say 'I've spotted what's going on';
- a quiet word;
- a sharp word;
- a verbal warning;
- a written warning;
- a low-level punishment (e.g. losing five minutes of break);
- loss of a privilege such as golden time;
- a 'community' sanction such as picking up litter from the classroom floor;
- a same-day detention;
- a longer or departmental detention;
- letter or phone call home;
- removal from the classroom by a senior member of staff.

**Using the choice**

The choice is a very useful technique for keeping calm when you have to apply sanctions. It will also help you avoid getting into confrontations with your students. The idea behind the choice is that it is up to the children to sort out their own behaviour. Your role is not about forcing them to do what you ask; instead you put the decision in their hands. Here's how it works:

- When a student misbehaves, make a statement about the behaviour you want.
- For instance, 'Jim, I want you to get on with your work now.'
If the student refuses to comply, offer a choice, outlining both the benefits of doing as you ask, and also the consequences of refusing.

So, you might say: 'Jim, you have a choice. You can do the work now, and maybe even earn a merit. Unfortunately if you refuse to work now, I will have to keep you in at break to complete the task.'

Once you’ve outlined the choice, walk away, leaving the child to consider his or her options.

Check after a minute or so to see if the student has made the right choice.

If not, apply the sanction you have outlined.

Making detentions work

Many secondary schools use detentions as the main form of sanction. They are also used fairly regularly at the upper end of the primary school. When you do have to give a detention, make sure that you do this in the best possible way. Here are some useful tips for getting the best out of detentions:

If possible, it is helpful if short detentions take place with you supervising and on the same day as the misdemeanour occurs (i.e. during a break or for a very short time after school).

It is absolutely vital that you remember to enforce detentions. If you don’t turn up, or if the child fails to attend, the sanction is worthless.

You might write the student’s name down in your planner and then cross it off when the detention has been served.

Consider what you and the child are going to do in the detention. Sometimes a punishment is appropriate, other times it is more effective to have a chat with the child about the behaviour and why it happened.

Aim to make the punishment fit the crime – wiping tables as a sanction for graffiti, picking up litter as a sanction for dropping it, writing a letter of apology if inappropriate language has been used.

Dealing with the serious incident

Serious incidents are, thankfully, reasonably rare in most schools. When they do happen, the new teacher can be left feeling vulnerable and upset. Don’t let the fear of abusive behaviour prey on your mind, but do be aware ahead of time what you should do if a serious incident occurs. Consider the following points:
Know what your school policy says about dealing with a child who is out of control. If there is a ‘red card’ or ‘panic button’ option, be aware of exactly how it works. Often, it will involve sending a trusted child to get help from a senior member of staff who is ‘on call’, i.e. available in case of emergencies.

Remember that the safety of the whole class is your responsibility. Remove other children from the immediate area, either by moving them to the side of the room, or lining them up outside.

To help you handle a confrontational child, try to stay calm, keeping your voice low and quiet, and making plenty of use of the child’s name.

Know what the guidelines are for dealing with violence and for restraining children.

Look at www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/guidanceonthelaw/10_98/summary.htm for a very useful overview.

After the event, take some time out to recover. If possible, sit with a friend in the staffroom and talk about what happened.

Make sure that information about the situation gets passed on to senior staff. Write down an account of the serious incident while it is still fresh in your mind.

Talk over what happened with an experienced member of staff, preferably your mentor. Does he or she have any advice or words of wisdom?

Don’t blame yourself or take it personally. Serious incidents are about the child and his or her personal situation, rather than about you as a teacher.

Effective use of rewards

Rewards will always be more effective than sanctions in encouraging good behaviour. Children of all ages respond well to motivators; the kind of reward that is useful and appropriate will depend a great deal on the age and outlook of the student. For some children, the only reward required is a sense of achievement, and the feeling that they are pleasing their teacher. The students who respond well to such intrinsic motivators are typically those from a background where learning is valued and supported. Other children need far more input, and far more obvious types of rewards. These students may well be from a background where there is less positive reinforcement, and less support for learning from the home.
Although your behaviour policy should outline the school rewards system, there is often plenty of scope for the teacher's personal input and individual ideas. After all, you know what best suits the children in your class. You can download a long list of ideas for rewards from my website, which I've gathered from schools around the UK. Here are some ideas about rewards that you might use in your classroom:

- verbal praise;
- a smile;
- a sticker;
- a stamp;
- a certificate;
- merits;
- a praise assembly;
- sweets;
- golden time.

The first lesson

In your first lesson (or your first day in the primary school) you should concentrate on stamping your personality and expectations on your class. This is the time to start creating a climate for good behaviour. But how exactly do you do this? With experience, every teacher finds his or her own way, but I would like to offer some ideas for you to consider before your own first lesson:

- Don't try to do too much: Curriculum-wise, it is best not to plan anything too ambitious for your first lesson with a class. It is likely that you will spend much of the time on administrative tasks such as checking names on the register, sorting out seating plans, explaining where equipment is kept, giving out books and talking to the children about your expectations. If you rush through these tasks to get on to the work you had planned to do, this will make you feel stressed and the children feel harried.
- Have a confident persona: The irony about getting good behaviour is that if you come across as nervous, your children will pick up on your uncertainty and respond by misbehaving. But of course it is only natural for an NQT to feel nervous in his or her first lesson. Do try to hide your inner feelings and have a confident, certain
persona – make sure you are well prepared and have a clear understanding of the whole school behaviour policy.

- **Explain your rules clearly:** The temptation to dive straight into your first ‘real’ lesson may be overwhelming, but I recommend that you spend some time (perhaps 10 to 15 minutes) discussing your ideas about classroom behaviour with your children. That way they know that you mean business and that you have a clear idea of your expectations. These rules give the children the set of boundaries that they need. This idea is covered in much more detail in the next section and in the model lesson in Chapter 4.

**Creating a seating plan**
The first lesson is the ideal time to create and impose a seating plan, particularly with students in Key Stages 2 and 3. There are lots of good reasons why this is: it shows a teacher who is in control of the classroom; it is a great way to learn names; it stops students sitting in social groups, which can lead to lots of chat; you can move away from a seating plan later, but imposing it after your first lesson would be tricky. Sometimes a seating plan is not such a good idea: with Key Stage 4 students, in a ‘difficult’ school, confrontations might arise. If you’re unsure, check with other more experienced staff on the training day.

You may feel a bit nervous about arranging a seating plan. Although it means spending time on organization at the start of the lesson, it is time well spent. Here are some tips to help you get it right:

- Draw your plan ahead of time – if there are copies of the seating plan on the door, the walls and your desk, this makes it tricky for students to claim they ‘don’t know where to sit’.
- Seat the students in alphabetical order – you don’t know them yet, so this makes sense and is the fairest way to do it. You can use ‘learning names’ as your excuse if you feel nervous about their reaction.
- Line the class up outside first – if there is space to do this, it allows you to make the entry to the classroom as smooth and uncomplicated as possible.
- Set a target – give the class a clear focus for getting to the right seats in a quick and sensible way.
- Incorporate a reward – offer a reward if they do this well, perhaps a couple of minutes’ ‘golden time’ at the end of the lesson to relax and chat.
- Use the register as a check – as you take the register for the first time, ensure that the children are seated as you had asked.
- Use ‘free choice of seating’ as a reward – offer this in the first lesson, but wait a while before you allow your class to move around. Make them earn it.

Setting the boundaries

Your tutors at college probably told you about the ‘honeymoon period’, the time when the students will do what you ask, before they have sussed you out. In most schools (although certainly not all) the students will sit and listen to you for the first couple of lessons, apparently absorbing every word you are saying. Then, just when you think it is safe to relax, they turn into the class from hell.

So, how can you avoid this situation? More experienced teachers may tell you that in a few years’ time you will find it easy to control your children. This, however, is not much consolation when you are an NQT. The last thing you want is to spend a whole year suffering before you get a chance to make a fresh start with a new set of students. And believe me once you have ‘lost’ a class, it is extremely difficult to get them back. I say this from bitter experience of a class that I ‘lost’ in my own NQT year.

What the students need at the start of your time together is for you to set the boundaries for them. If you do this effectively, and stick to them, you will make life much simpler and easier for yourself. If you fail to do it, like children the world over, your students will push and push until they find out exactly how much they can get away with. When you first start out, it is tricky to do, because it’s hard to know exactly what you can and should expect.

A teacher in an FE college told me a brilliant story about how he explains his boundaries. In his first lesson with a class, he draws a line on the board and asks the students what it is. When they say ‘a line’, he tells them ‘that’s right – now just make sure you don’t step over it’. When you set boundaries this is what you are doing – drawing a line in the sand and saying ‘you can do anything on this side of the line, but the stuff on the other side is forbidden’. The younger your students, the clearer you will need to be about exactly what is and is not all right.

To set the boundaries effectively, you need to:

- think carefully ahead of time about what is and is not okay in your classroom;
use the school behaviour policy and school rules as a basis for your boundaries;
spend time talking about your boundaries at the start of your first lesson;
keep your boundaries clear and simple – with the youngest children, start with no more than three main rules;
aim to use positive statements of the behaviour you want, rather than negative ones about what you don’t;
use the word ‘we’ for your statements as it suggests a sense of inclusivity – the teacher is involved as well as the students;
talk with your children about the reasons for having these boundaries, the rewards they can expect if they follow them, and the sanctions they will get if they don’t;
elicit the boundaries from your students, so that they are agreed together;
make a list to go on your classroom wall – this should be big and clear;
refer to your list regularly, for positive behaviour as well as negative;
talk again about your boundaries at the end of the lesson, the start of the next – again and again until the students understand.

Although most schools have similar expectations of student behaviour, the way that these are expressed varies quite a bit. You can find some suggested rules below to give you a starting point for setting your own boundaries. For each of the rules I’ve given a brief description of how you might introduce this rule to your class – how it works and why it is important.

- **Rule: We listen in silence when someone is talking.**
  *This applies to teacher, support staff and students. It’s polite, respectful and it means we can get on with the lesson.*

- **Rule: We arrive at lessons ready and prepared to learn.**
  *This means you arrive on time, with your equipment/kit, with a positive attitude about the learning. That way we get on with our lessons and enjoy ourselves.*

- **Rule: We show respect to each other at all times.**
  *This includes no swearing, no shouting, no aggression, etc. I will respect you and I expect you to do the same to me.*
Rule: We work to the best of our ability.

*Be willing to try hard and to push yourselves, and make sure you do homework. I will put lots of effort into preparing interesting lessons and supporting you.*

**Ten tried and tested teaching tips**

New teachers are constantly bombarded with information and advice, and it can all seem a bit overwhelming at times. This is particularly true with behaviour management, because it is a complex and subtle skill for you to acquire, and there are many different approaches that might work in any given situation. I would like to offer you ten practical and straightforward tips to refer to early on in the year or at moments of crisis or despair when it all seems to be going wrong. These tips are a useful summary of the things that I learned during my NQT year.

1. Wait for them.
2. Perfect the deadly stare.
4. Put yourself in their shoes.
5. Avoid confrontation (also known as ‘you get what you deserve’).
6. Praise one, encourage all.
7. Quiet teachers get quiet classes.
8. Explain, repeat, explain.
10. Give one instruction at a time.

**Wait for them**

If there was only one piece of advice I could give teachers about behaviour management, it would be this: *wait for them.* If you follow this strategy from the start, your children will know that it is the way you work. Do not open your mouth to teach until you have complete silence, and I mean complete. Do not start talking until every single student is looking directly at you. Even if you have to use a million different strategies to gain their attention, eventually they will come to you. But if you talk over them at the start, it will only get worse.

This idea is so useful and important that I am going to repeat it. *Do not open your mouth until you have complete and total silence and every student is sitting still and looking at you.* Fold your arms, look impatient, check your watch, take out the novel you are in the middle of reading,
do some knitting, gaze at the view out of the window, but on no account talk to a class of students who are not listening.

There are a number of reasons why doing this is so crucial:

- First and foremost, it means good quality teaching and learning can take place.
- It stamps a considerable amount of authority on you for very little effort.
- It sends a message — I refuse to allow you to be disrespectful to me.
- If you do choose to talk over the students, you are effectively saying ‘go ahead and talk, I don’t mind’.
- At first, they may only chat quietly, but this is the first step on the slippery slope to a ‘lost’ class.

It can seem scary at first, but if you wait the vast majority of classes will come to you, especially in your very first lesson. If you start to panic and feel you must intervene, you might try:

- Using tips (2) and (6) — the deadly stare and praise one, encourage all.
- A non-verbal signal, such as three claps.
- Standing beside any student who is still talking.
- Writing ‘whole class detention’ and a circle on the board and adding minutes to this.

In some very difficult schools, these low-level strategies may not work, and you might have to resort to more unusual or extreme approaches. The key is to keep trying until you find something that works — be the teacher who refuses to give up. (In one school, it took me almost a term with one class, but I got there eventually). For some examples of other useful strategies, see my book Getting the Buggers to Behave.

**Perfect the deadly stare**

As a teacher, you have access to many different forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Perhaps the most effective way of communicating your feelings is the ‘deadly stare’. Perfect this and you will never have to ask for silence again. You will be able to walk into a classroom and silence your students with a glance. There is no easy way of describing the deadly stare, but you will know when
you have perfected it. The deadly stare says: ‘I am the teacher, I am in charge, and if you do not close your mouth, stop talking and wait for my commands, you are likely to suffer in the most horrible way known to humankind. So, be sensible, be quiet and let’s get on with the lesson.’ And all that without opening your mouth! The deadly stare might include all or some of the following elements:

- A quick fixed stare at an individual who is not doing what you wish.
- A raised eyebrow to show your surprise at a student’s temerity.
- A pursed mouth to show disapproval.
- A furrowed brow.

**Strike a balance**

Teaching is about balance in so many ways, but unfortunately this is one of the hardest things to achieve. You need to develop a sense of ‘where the students are coming from’, as a teacher in my first school used to say. By this I mean:

- adapting your teaching style to suit the class and the children;
- changing lesson content/format/delivery to suit the class;
- using a verbal approach that sits well with the students;
- applying sanctions and rewards in a way that suits them.

With experience, you will use a very different attitude and style with a class of 15-year-olds than with one of 11-year-olds, or with the well-motivated 5-year-olds in your class, and their less enthusiastic peers. You will only be storing up trouble for yourself if what you demand and how you phrase it does not match the class and the children. Here are some tips about how you can learn to strike a balance:

- **Be willing to negotiate**: Although for most of the time you do need to give an aura of complete certainty, it is a good idea to know when negotiation is appropriate. For instance, a bottom set in an examination year may be completely disillusioned with school. If they feel they are not going to do well in their exams, they will resent a teacher who tries to force them to work hard all the time. Far better to be realistic: if they work solidly for 20 minutes, they could earn a five-minute break for a chat.

- **Respond to the ‘mood’ of the class**: Your class will often arrive in a ‘mood’ – whether good or bad. This might be influenced by the
weather, the time of the week, or some other external factor. In the secondary school, perhaps their previous lesson went badly; in the primary school, maybe there was a confrontation at lunchtime. If you sense that your class is full of enthusiasm and in the mood for hard graft, then capitalize on this by getting through lots of work. If you feel that the class is overexcited, spend some time calming your children down. If your class seems down and in a foul mood, you need to work hard to create a positive atmosphere.

◆ **Show that you’re human:** Of course you need to start out firm with your children, and stick with a fairly strict approach for some time. But there will be occasions when you can allow just a hint that beneath it all you are actually a human being. This might involve laughing at yourself when you make a stupid mistake; it could mean giving your class a ten-minute break at the end of a particularly hard day.

**Put yourself in their shoes**

This tip is worth following whenever something or someone is frustrating you. That brilliant lesson you spent three hours planning is going wrong? Put yourself in your children’s shoes and try to see it from their point of view. What would they say is wrong with it? Why exactly are they looking so bored? (You might even be brave enough to ask them!) The students at the back of the class keep talking and passing love notes while you are trying to explain the finer points of quadratic equations. Put yourself in their shoes – you were young once, sometimes school can be just plain boring, no matter how good the teacher is. Develop empathy, and constantly remind yourself what it was like to be a kid. This will help you evaluate the work you set, and the way you teach, from a far more objective viewpoint.

**Avoid confrontation (also known as ‘you get what you deserve’)**

If someone is screaming at you, how does it make you feel? Now think about how children must feel if a teacher shouts at them. You wouldn’t behave like this if you worked in an office, would you, so try your hardest not to do it to your students. When a teacher does become confrontational with the children, they may respond aggressively in return. In teaching, you get what you deserve, and if you do not show respect for your students, it is far more likely that confrontations will occur.

Confrontations can arise for many reasons in the classroom. You’re
human, and sometimes controlling 30 (or more) students can be exhausting. Sometimes a child will treat you in a totally unacceptable way, and the natural response is to give as good as you get. Do try your hardest to keep calm at all times. You will get far better results by reasoning with someone rather than confronting them. Here are some useful tips about staying calm and avoiding confrontation:

- **Build a barrier:** The normal human reaction to an aggressive encounter is to become angry or upset. Many teachers are faced by confrontational behaviour on a regular basis; we need to find ways of taking a reasoned and professional approach. Build a metaphorical barrier between you and the confrontational child, so that any poor or abusive behaviour simply ‘bounces off’ your defences. That is not to say don’t deal with the misbehaviour, but aim not to let it get to you.

- **Don’t take it personally:** It is very tempting to feel that an abusive student is picking on you personally, and to give a very emotional response to this ‘attack’. In fact the child is often simply responding to a situation that he or she finds hard to deal with (perhaps being told off, or being asked to work on a difficult task). Try to view the behaviour as separate from the child, and see it as a symptom of a deeper problem, rather than any personal reflection on you as a person or as a teacher.

- **Choose sympathy over anger:** Any child who becomes confrontational with a teacher clearly has a problem of some sort. To help you stay calm, and to defuse a difficult situation, try to view the aggressive individual with sympathy rather than anger. This approach also helps take the wind out of the aggressive child’s sails and to make it less likely that things will escalate.

- **Try to apply reason to the situation:** Using your calm and unruffled persona, talk to the child about what is going on. Encourage the student to discuss his or her behaviour and what has caused it. Talk to the child about what will happen if the behaviour continues, for instance that you will have no option but to apply a sanction.

**Praise one, encourage all**

You were probably told at college that praise is a very effective teaching tool. However, generalized praise (although useful) has its limits. Next time you want a class to behave in a certain way, try singling out one individual who is already doing what you want. *That’s great, Sundip, it looks like you’re ready to get on with the lesson, because*
you're sitting really quietly and waiting for me to take the register. Well done.' This is far more effective than moaning at the class to be quiet. It is also a useful back-up tip for getting silence - do give it a try, you may be pleasantly surprised at how quickly and easily it works.

**Quiet teachers get quiet classes**

When I was a trainee teacher, on one teaching practice I worked with a class that had two teachers, one for Monday to Wednesday and one for Thursday and Friday. They were both excellent teachers, but one spoke really quietly to the class and the other was much louder. The difference in the classroom noise levels amazed me: with the quiet teacher, the children had to listen really carefully, and the class was quieter as a whole. The big advantage of being a quiet teacher is the saving you will make on your voice. For many NQTs, a strained voice can be a real problem, leading to sore throats and time off work. The other advantage is that a quiet class is generally less stressful and your children will be calmer and less excitable. Here are some tips about how you can become a quiet teacher:

- **Learn to hear yourself:** Take a moment when you are teaching to listen to yourself. How loud are you? And just how loud do you really need to be? Consider the tone of your voice as well, and whether you sound strained or relaxed. This will transmit itself to the children, and have a direct effect on their work and behaviour.

- **Learn to turn the sound down:** As you listen to yourself, imagine you are turning the volume down on a stereo and aim to do the same with your voice. Very often, we speak much more loudly than is actually necessary. Obviously, you need to be careful not to take this to extremes: don't speak so quietly that no one can actually hear you.

- **Try not to talk too much:** When you first start teaching, it is very tempting to do a lot of talking at your class. You might feel more in control when teaching from the front, but this will put a strain on your voice and it can be less effective as a teaching strategy. If you talk for a long time, it is likely that you will raise the volume gradually, without even realizing it. Keep teacher talk to a minimum, and student participation to a maximum.

**Explain, repeat, explain**

One of the biggest problems inexperienced teachers face is the frustrations caused by misunderstandings in the classroom. You know
the scenario from teaching practice: you spend five minutes explaining to the class what you want them to do, they start to work, then a few seconds later three hands go up – 'Miss/Sir, I don’t understand ... what did you say I have to do?' It is actually surprisingly difficult to give clear and straightforward instructions that your children will understand. This is one of many key skills that you have to acquire during your first year in the job.

Remember that the children are being bombarded with new information, particularly at the start of term and especially those new to a school. This is where the strategy of 'explain, repeat, explain' comes in.

1. **Explain**: Tell the class what you want them to do.
2. **Repeat**: Ask a student to repeat what you just said (choose one who looks as if he or she was not listening). If this student is not sure, ask for someone who is to raise a hand. By hearing the students' interpretation, you may find out that they did not actually understand your instructions.
3. **Explain**: Repeat the instructions again in your own words, clarifying any areas of uncertainty, and then ask: 'Is there anyone who's not sure what we're going to do?'

This might sound patronizing, but it really does help clarify any misunderstandings and also encourages the children to listen carefully the first time. There may be genuine misunderstandings taking place, perhaps because you are not experienced in giving clear instructions, or the students are not yet used to your way of working.

**Always set a time limit**

Your children want boundaries: they are still unsure of where they stand in the world and what is expected of them. Even as adults we crave the security of knowing what we are expected to do. So, when you set a task make sure your students know how long they have to complete it – whether it is 3 minutes, 20 minutes or 5 lessons. Think about how people work – we are always more efficient when we have a deadline to meet – and use this to your advantage in the classroom.

Once you have set your time limit and allowed the students to start working on the task, give them a constant reminder of how long they have left. Your actual measuring of the time can be flexible according to how quickly you think the students are progressing (two minutes can always be stretched to three). Alternatively, you could say to them,
'When you see that it's 10 past 10, I'd like you all to stop working and wait for the next instruction. I'm not going to remind you about the time, I'd like to see how well you can observe this time limit yourselves.' When the deadline arrives, some of the more observant students will notice and stop working. As the noise levels drop, the others will join in until everyone falls silent.

**Give one instruction at a time**

As we saw above ('Explain, repeat, explain'), it is surprisingly difficult to give clear instructions that everyone will understand. It is tempting to give your class a long list of instructions to follow, particularly if you are setting a complicated task. Remember though that it is hard for children to take in and retain a lot of information at once. It works far better to give one instruction at a time, stopping after each one to ensure that the students have understood what you want them to do. Again, this will avoid problems with misunderstandings and students continually asking what they have to do.

When you are giving instructions, you may find that the children are so eager to get started on the activity that they go to start work the minute you pause for breath. A very useful way of avoiding this is to state at the beginning: 'When I say “go” I want you to ...'. If your children jump up, ready to get started, stop them by asking 'Did you hear me say “go” yet?' They will quickly be trained to wait for you to finish, and to say 'Ready, steady, go!'

**Learning names**

Learning your children's names is absolutely vital for good behaviour management; it's all part of building a good and strong relationship with them. However, there is no overestimating how difficult learning names can be. This is particularly true for secondary school teachers of subjects such as PE, music, drama and RE, who may have a large number of classes that they see for an hour a week. There are a variety of strategies that you can use to help you learn your students' names (see below for some suggestions). I would strongly recommend that you put these into use immediately you start with any class.

Until you have a good idea of the children’s names, it is very hard to control them effectively. A reprimand is always much more powerful if you can use the student’s name; similarly praise is far better if you can personalize it. You will probably find it fairly easy to learn the names of
the ‘good’ children, who always answer questions, and the ‘bad’ ones, who are always messing around. However, when it comes to writing reports, it can be extremely embarrassing if you cannot remember which student fits which name (or even which gender they are). Here are a few ideas that have worked for me:

- Use an alphabetical seating plan, and refer to it as you take the register.
- In the first few lessons, use sticky name labels or get the children to make name plates to put on their desks.
- Use the children’s names as often as possible, whenever you address them.
- Make a few subtle annotations on your register (nothing rude, just in case a child or an inspector looks at it!).
- Try out some memory systems to improve your memory – Tony Buzan’s books are a great starting point.

Another useful approach is to play some name games with your class, particularly in the first few lessons. These are fun and useful for reinforcing names (both for you and for your students). Here are a few suggestions:

- **The adjective game**: The students find an adjective to describe themselves, starting with the same letter as their name, e.g. ‘My name is Sue and I am stupendous.’
- **Pass the name**: To start, the students say their own name, and then the name of the person they are passing to. Anyone who pauses or makes a mistake is out. ‘Tim to Anna, Anna to Chirag, Chirag to Shami’, and so on. Ask the students to pass to someone of the opposite sex, to make it harder and to avoid friends passing to friends all the time.
- **Pass the name (version 2)**: This is a combination of the two games above and requires the students to remember each other’s adjectives: ‘Terrible Tim to Anxious Anna, Anxious Anna to Careful Chirag, Careful Chirag to Silly Shami’, and so on.

**The delicate art of bluff**

For the secondary school teacher with a large number of students (perhaps seen only once a fortnight), sometimes it proves impossible to remember all the names. The week of reports comes and you are panicking. You only have one more lesson with these students before
you have to comment on them. What can you do? Here are a few strategies that I admit to using, involving the ‘gentle art of bluff’:

- **Question and answer:** Ask a question using the name of a specific student and then look to see who answers.
- **State your name:** Set a group or individual task and ask the students to state their names before they start their presentation.
- **Off you go:** Ask the children to stand behind their chairs or get ready to leave in name order. When you call out the names of the children you do not know, look to see who moves.
- **Ask for help:** Ask a child you can trust to be discreet for the name that you cannot remember. They will be delighted that you have asked for their assistance.
- **Name your reward:** Give out merit marks (or whatever rewards your school uses) and as you write them into the student’s diary, check the name on the front.

**Your teaching style**

As you look around your school and listen to students talking about other members of staff, you will begin to see how teachers each have their own individual teaching style. This is especially so when it comes to managing behaviour. The style you use is entirely a matter of personal taste: it depends on your personality and also on the kind of students you are teaching. My experience suggests that some approaches are far more effective than others. Consider the impact of the following aspects of your own teaching style.

**What you wear**

The way you dress will vary according to your age range, the subject you teach and the type of school you work in. For instance, if you are a PE or drama teacher, you may need to wear loose clothing so that you can demonstrate activities for the students. If your school has a strict uniform code for the children, it is likely that the head expects the staff to dress smartly as well. As a new teacher, I would avoid wearing casual clothing. If you dress smartly you will give your children the impression that you mean business. Your class will be making judgements about you from the moment they meet you, and the way that you dress is part of this.
What you say
The phrases you use and the way you speak will communicate your style to the children. This is about the way that you set work, and also about how you maintain order in your classroom. You will probably find that you talk to your students in a very different way from that in which you talk to your friends and other adults. If you are a secondary teacher, your speaking style will vary according to the age of the students. We all adapt the way we speak according to the situations we are in and the impression we want to give, so be aware of this, particularly in your early lessons. Aim for a speaking style that is:

- clear-cut;
- straightforward;
- relaxed;
- interesting;
- engaging;
- consistent;
- controlled.

How you maintain order
The way you create discipline (or fail to) will give out strong messages about your teaching style. The ideal situation is for the students to view you as firm but fair, and hopefully fun too. You should apply exactly the same rules for every child, but be aware that certain situations and individuals will call for careful handling. Aim to keep order in a way that is:

- calm;
- confident;
- assertive;
- assured;
- certain;
- aware;
- positive;
- firm;
- consistent;
- structured.

How you set and mark work
The way in which you set work, and mark the results, will affect the way your students perceive you and the way they behave for you. If
your lessons are interesting, well structured and have clear aims, you will maintain your children’s interest and keep them engaged in their learning. If you set lots of work that you ask the students to complete quickly, but fail to mark, they will view you as unreasonable. On the other hand, if you never set homework and allow the children to work at their own pace, they may well like you, but whether they will respect you is another matter. The teacher’s expectations about the work that will be done play a vital role in communicating his or her style, and in setting up a climate for good or bad behaviour.

**What you do**
Teachers should avoid saying one thing and doing another. If you expect your children to behave well, but you treat them without respect, you are storing up trouble for yourself. If you set the boundaries at the start and stick to them in a fair manner, the children will know exactly where they stand. It is important for you to have interests outside school. Your students want to feel that you are a person as well as a teacher. Take an interest in wider issues, including the latest cultural and technological developments. Aim to comment on matters that are of interest to your students, and incorporate them into your lessons where possible.

**How you set up your classroom**
If you are a primary teacher, or a lucky secondary teacher, you will have a space of your own, a classroom that you teach in all the time. The students will make judgements about you by looking at your room, and consequently make decisions about how they are going to behave, often at a subconscious level. This process will be taking place right from the very first moment they arrive at your class. There are a number of ways in which you can influence behaviour through the way you set up your room:

- **Personalizing the space:** Before the first lesson of the year, spend some time personalizing your classroom space. This will help stamp your mark on the room and show that you are in control. You might put up a sign with your name on it; you could create some displays about the work that will be done at the beginning of term; you might put up some colourful posters.
- **The layout of the room:** There is a temptation to maintain the status quo in the way that your room is laid out, particularly when you are new to a school. There is no reason at all why you should not
change the layout of your room to suit your own teaching needs and style. Perhaps you might want to turn the desks to face in a different direction, or create different learning zones in the primary classroom. Again, this will help show the children that this is your space, one in which you maintain overall control.

◆ The layout of the desks: Setting out a classroom in rows gives a very different message to grouping the tables. Similarly, a U-shape arrangement will send a very different signal. This is a matter of personal opinion as well as being dictated by the type of room you have. See the following section for more comments on this.

**Managing the space**

Think carefully about how practical your classroom layout is before the year begins. At the lower end of the primary range, there can be quite a lot of flexibility about how different areas of your room are arranged. You might have a place for art, another for sand and water work, a carpet for stories and whole-class discussions, and some desks for written activities. If you do plan to make a lot of changes to a lower primary classroom, it is worth drawing some plans before you start reorganizing the furniture.

Higher up the primary school, and in the secondary school, desks are often arranged either in rows or in groups. There is no reason why you should not start with the desks in rows and then change the layout later in the term. There is also no reason why you should not move furniture for specific lessons, but there are administrative problems associated with this that you must deal with. If you are a secondary school teacher using someone else's classroom, you will make yourself extremely unpopular if you move the furniture, but do not return it to its previous position.

The plus and minus sides of three of the most popular classroom layouts are explained below.

**Desks in rows**

◆ *Advantages:* All the students are facing the front, which makes it easier to check that they are listening and allows everyone to see the board easily. You can give out and collect in resources and books along each row, which makes things simpler. The students will view you as a 'traditional' teacher (not necessarily an advantage, but this can be useful with a class where behaviour is causing difficulties).
◆ **Disadvantages:** It is hard to do any meaningful group or discussion work without substantial rearrangement of the furniture. There may be the temptation to ignore the ends of rows, where you cannot see the students so easily. You will only be able to give individual help to two students at a time. This style of layout does tend to encourage 'chalk and talk' teaching, i.e. the teacher standing at the front, talking to the class and writing notes on the board.

**Desks in groups**

◆ **Advantages:** Group work and discussions can take place easily, and you can talk to a whole group of students at one time. You will be encouraged to move around the classroom more; as a result this layout encourages an interactive style of teaching.

◆ **Disadvantages:** The students may not be able to see the board so easily. It is harder to ensure that all students are paying silent attention if some of them have their backs to you. It can be harder to give out resources. In a poorly behaved class, the children could interpret this layout as the sign of a relaxed teaching style.

**Desks in a U shape**

◆ **Advantages:** This is an excellent layout for whole-class discussions and debates. It is straightforward to hand out resources and all the students are able to see the board.

◆ **Disadvantages:** This layout can make group work tricky. It can be difficult to fit desks into this arrangement in a large class, or in a classroom where there is not much space.

**Creating groups**

For many activities you will need the students to work in groups, and creating these can be a challenge in itself. I would advise against planning group work when you are very new to your class or classes. Spend a little time on individual or pair work first, so that when you do attempt a group activity the students have a very clear idea about your expectations of their behaviour. Before starting on group work, there are various factors for you to consider:

◆ **Moving the furniture:** If your desks are laid out in rows, make sure that you allow sufficient time for moving the furniture and
returning it to its former position. Rather than having a free-for-all, it is worth taking time over this and asking one group of students at a time to rearrange their desks. Decide beforehand on the best layout of desks for the type of work you want to do.

- **Combinations:** Keep a careful eye on the combinations in each group. Ensure that any troublemakers are kept separate; they have a tendency to gravitate to each other. Ensure too that there is a good mix in each group, with leaders as well as followers. Be wary about putting too many strong personalities together.

- **Teacher versus student groupings:** Before you go ahead with group work, decide whether you are going to create the groups yourself, or whether you are going to allow the students to do this. If you are only doing the occasional bit of group work, there is probably no harm in allowing the children to decide on groupings for themselves. However, if group work plays an essential part in your subject or age level you will need to set the groups yourself to ensure that the children work with a variety of others, rather than just with their friends. This will also help avoid the situation where one (unpopular) child is left out of the groupings.

- **A good mixture:** If the group work is going to go on for a while, spend some time working the groups out in advance, so that you get a good mix in each one. An excellent way of creating ‘instant’ mixed groups is by numbering the students. For instance, if you want groups of three and you have 30 students in your class, ask them to count around the room up to ten. All the ones will then work together, all the twos and so on. This works for groups of any size.
Teaching and learning lie at the heart of a teacher's role. As with many aspects of the profession, it is only once you take on your first real teaching job that you realize the extent of the balancing act involved. There is simply no way that you can be at your peak with the content and delivery of lessons at all times. You have to make some difficult decisions in order to help you survive and succeed in the profession over the longer term.

This chapter gives you lots of hints about effective teaching and learning. It includes a range of ideas and strategies, including: why aims are so important; how to set up the pattern of your lessons; and how you might use resources to the best effect. In acknowledgement of the reality of a teacher's working life, I have also included a section that gives you ideas for how and what to teach when you are feeling exhausted.

Effective teaching and learning

Offering our children effective teaching and learning should, above all else, be an imaginative and exciting experience, both for the teacher and for the students. Sadly, the creative energy that you might spend on planning and delivering wonderful lessons often gets dissipated under the myriad strains of the job. Working with a curriculum that has become tightly prescribed may also have a negative impact on your enjoyment of classroom teaching. The tips below should help you maintain and develop your own teaching and learning.

- *Stay enthused:* As a trainee you would have had the energy and time to plan and teach some really high-quality lessons. Although you may not be able to offer your children a constant diet of brilliant lessons, it is important not to lose your enthusiasm for the process
of teaching. In my experience, the positive reaction that you receive from your children when you do a good lesson breeds more energy and leads to a much more positive outlook on the job.

- **Create and deliver engaging lessons:** Learning how to get your children engaged in the learning process is an absolutely vital skill for the teacher to acquire. A lesson that engages your class will require less energy from you in terms of classroom control, because your students will be too busy working to misbehave. The positive response of children to an engaging lesson should fire your enthusiasm as a teacher.

- **Take a positive approach:** Children are very sensitive to the vibes given off by their teachers. If you come into the classroom in a good, positive mood, planning to deliver an interesting and engaging lesson, this will rub off on your students and you will get a good reaction. If you feel negative or even bored by the lesson content and delivery, your class will pick this up and may well be difficult.

- **Use a clear structure:** Children welcome structure — where the teacher gives a pattern to the lessons and the learning. A good way to offer your children a clear structure is to state your aims very clearly right at the start. Structure will also be apparent in the way that you start and finish your lessons, for instance having an engaging starter and asking your children to stand behind their seats before the bell goes.

- **Set targets:** Students like to have a target to aim for, whether for work or for behaviour. You might set targets for how well the work should be completed; you could set targets that define how quickly an activity should be done. This gives your children something concrete to aim for and achieve.

- **Use plenty of rewards:** Rewards go hand in hand with targets – if the children can manage to achieve ‘x’, their reward will be to receive ‘y’. This constant target setting/reward giving helps create a sense of partnership between the teacher and the class. You are asking your children to work hard, and you are rewarding them when they achieve what you know they can.

**The importance of aims and objectives**

I can remember very clearly my lecturers at college going on and on about aims and objectives, but they never made any real sense to me
until I actually started teaching. There are a whole range of reasons why these are crucial:

- **Setting boundaries for the learning**: As we saw in the last chapter, your students need and appreciate boundaries: boundaries for how you want them to behave and boundaries for what you want them to learn. By setting an aim for each lesson, the teacher gives the students information about what should be achieved during that period of time. At the end of your time together, the class can review their progress to see whether the aims have been realized.

- **Giving a purpose to the work**: By explaining the aims of the lesson, the teacher demonstrates to the students the purpose of the work they are doing. If your children can understand the reason behind the work, they are more likely to approach it with a positive and hard-working attitude. It's also likely that they will behave better.

- **Setting targets to aim for**: State your aim at the beginning of each lesson: this is what we are aiming to achieve today. This gives the students a target to aim at, just like setting a time limit for a piece of work. Keep referring back to your aim during the lesson to keep the students on task and on target.

- **Creating a sense of achievement**: At the end of the lesson, you can use the aim to summarize what the children have done, and how well they have done it. You can discuss with them whether they have achieved what they set out to do at the start. If they have, then they know they have learned something — and praise is in order. Sometimes, your children will achieve lots, but not exactly what you had expected. There is nothing wrong with this — lessons can be organic as well as highly structured.

- **Creating a structure**: Children welcome structure from their teachers, and the same applies to the aims of a lesson. Once again, put yourself in your students' shoes. If a teacher launches into a subject, without ever explaining what is happening or where the lesson is going, they will feel 'at sea'. The intrinsic human tendency to place a structure on our experiences means that, without realizing it, they will probably piece together what the aim is for themselves. To avoid confusion, and to save time and effort, the teacher can do this for the students.

**Success criteria, WALT/WILF**

In recent years, the idea of having clear aims has been extended and developed. Teachers are now encouraged to get students to help
develop ‘success criteria’ – to understand what will be in a finished piece of work if it is successful. The acronyms WALT and WILF have also been introduced, particularly in the primary school. These two terms provide a useful back-up to the idea of aims. They stand for: ‘We Are Learning To’ and ‘What I’m Looking For’. By working these things out ahead of time, the children have a very clear structure within which to work.

The ‘organic’ lesson
Having said all this, there is absolutely no harm in allowing some lessons to develop in a more organic way. Start with an interesting resource, or a topical theme, and see where the children want to take it. You might have some idea of where the lesson is heading, or allow your students to direct it in their own way. These organic lessons are probably best saved for when Ofsted is not in the building.

A model first lesson
At this point I would like to offer a model for a first lesson to give you something concrete to hang on to. This is not model in the sense of a perfect lesson (in fact, you’ll see the teacher make quite a few mistakes – see how many you can spot). It is a fairly static and ‘safe’ lesson, and could certainly be spiced up by incorporating some group discussions. What it does do is give you a suggested structure to follow. The structure that is seen here shows how you can create a pattern in your lessons, both in behaviour management and also in approaches to teaching and learning. Giving your children a sense that the lessons follow a familiar pattern helps them feel secure about the structures you use.

The model lesson below is intended as a guide and is based on a first-year (Year 7) secondary school class. The class is doing a subject where written work is used, for example English or history. However, many of the points made and strategies adopted here will apply to children of different ages and studying different subjects. The majority of this first lesson is spent on explaining the rules and expectations. These are taught in exactly the same way as the subject content of a lesson would be delivered. You will see the teacher using many of the tips here that were given in the previous chapter on behaviour management.

The model is set out like a play script: I have included details of what
the teacher does, a commentary that explains the reasons behind her comments and actions, and also some possible student reactions (and why the students might react in this way). I have assumed a lesson length of about one hour.

(The students arrive in dribs and drabs as they have had trouble finding the classroom.)

COMMENT: The teacher does not feel this slight lateness is a problem in the first lesson with Year 7s and does not make an issue of it. This may be different with a class of older students who should know their way around.

(As they arrive the teacher directs them towards the seating plan she has made and put up on the wall. They are to sit in alphabetical order.)

Teacher: (to individuals and small groups of students) Have a look at this seating plan I’ve made and see how quickly you can find your place. Well done Ahmed, that was really quick, you obviously want to go to break on time.

COMMENT: The teacher has challenged them to make the seating plan seem like a competition rather than a control mechanism. She has then praised an individual student by name (she knows his name from the position he is sitting in) to encourage the others, and hinted at a potential reward.

Teacher: While you’re waiting for everyone to arrive, you can chat quietly among yourselves.

COMMENT: The teacher knows that there is no chance or point in getting the class silent and then being constantly interrupted. It is far better to make them feel you have been generous enough to ‘allow’ them to talk for a while.
Teacher: Right, before I start I want to see everyone sitting still and looking directly at me. (She pauses until she has their full attention.) Thank you. Well done. As you know from your timetables, my name is Miss Cowley and I'm going to be your teacher this year. You can see how to spell my name, because I've written it on the noticeboard over there. (She indicates the board and the students look.) Now, in today's lesson we are going to aim to get through lots of administrative tasks: checking names, discussing our rules, giving out books and so on.

COMMENT: The teacher has waited for the complete attention of all the students. She has informed the class what the aim for this lesson is and why. She will refer back to her aim later, to ensure that it remains explicit.

Teacher: The first thing I'd like to do is to take the register, so that I can check that everyone is here and learn how to pronounce your names. I'll also be able to check that you're sitting alphabetically, as on my seating plan. If I do pronounce your name incorrectly please let me know.

Student: (nervously calling out) Miss, miss, I didn't realize we had to sit where you said. I'm in the wrong place. (Other students start to call out that they're in the wrong places too.)

COMMENT: The teacher should have stated 'Put your hands up if you think you might be in the wrong place.' She has also given rather a lot of information at once and this may confuse them (see Chapter 3 'Give one instruction at a time').

Teacher: (waits for silence with arms folded) Please put your hand up if you think you might be sitting in the wrong place. (Thankfully only four
hands go up.) Now, one at a time please go and check on the seating plan where you should be sitting. You go first. (They swap themselves around.) Now, let's get on with the register. Ahmed.

(As the teacher calls out each name she looks up to see the student and to check that she is pronouncing the name correctly.)

Teacher: Okay, well done. That's how I will start every lesson, by taking the register, so that I can find out who is here and also check if anybody arrives late. As you can see, I have a lot of names to learn and I'm going to need your help to do it over the next few weeks. You might be wondering why you're sitting in alphabetical order, well that's why, so that I can learn your names. Once I have learned them, and if I'm sure you are behaving yourselves very well, I might allow you to move to sit next to your friends.

COMMENT: The teacher has started to develop the idea of a partnership – they will have to help her learn their names. She has also explained why they are sitting like this, to preempt the question that would no doubt have cropped up soon. She has also made it clear when and how she will allow them to move to sit somewhere else.

Teacher: The first thing I'd like to do today is to explain exactly what I expect of you in my lessons. That way you'll be clear about what you have to do and about what you shouldn't do. If you have any questions at any time, please raise your hands rather than calling out, so that I can hear what each of you has to say. I'm afraid that you will have to sit still and listen for a while, but I'll try to be as brief as I can.

COMMENT: The teacher is now going to explain her boundaries to the class and she has referred back to the aim of the lesson. She has reiterated the point about raising hands to ask questions and has also explained why this is necessary. She has warned them in advance that they are going to have to listen carefully for a while.
Teacher: The first and most important rule in my lessons is that nobody talks while somebody else is talking. Can anybody tell me why this is so important?

Student: I can, Miss!

Teacher: (ignores the student who has called out and checks seating plan for the name of a student who has his/her hand up.) Yasmin, you’ve remembered to put your hand up, well done. Can you tell me why this is so important?

Yasmin: So that we can hear what you are saying, Miss.

Teacher: That’s right. Very good. It’s very important that everyone can hear what I am saying. You will also need to listen to each other very carefully. Now, what do you think the punishment will be if you do talk while I am talking Yasmin?

Yasmin: A detention, Miss?

Teacher: That’s right, but to show how fair and reasonable I am I will give you two warnings first. After that, if you talk again I will have to keep you in for 15 minutes to think about your behaviour. If you still keep talking the detention will go up to 30 minutes. If you find it impossible to stay quiet, I’m afraid I will have no alternative but to send you to ... (the head of department).

COMMENT: By ignoring the student who has called out, the teacher has made it clear that she does not want them to do this, without having to state it explicitly. After the student has answered correctly she has used praise and then repeated the rule, developing the answer a little (see Chapter 3 ‘Explain, repeat, explain’). She has then gone on to make the sanction for this misbehaviour clear. The sanctions stated will obviously depend on the individual teacher or school.

Teacher: Now, my second rule is that you arrive at lessons ready to learn. That means on time, with your books and equipment, and in the right frame of mind to work. That way we can start work immediately.
Put your hand up if you can tell me what you think you should do if another teacher keeps you behind, or if there is any other reason that you are late. Yes, Ben, what do you think?

Ben: We should get them to write a note in our diary, Miss?

Teacher: That’s right again. Well done. And if you come to a lesson late without a very good reason, I’m afraid I will have to keep you behind to make up the time. Now let’s talk about how we should approach our work. Does anyone have any ideas about this? Put your hands up if you do.

COMMENT: Although it appears that the rules are now being opened for discussion, it is fairly straightforward to elicit the responses you want or to mould the students’ replies to suit your requirements. The teacher will continue to go through all her boundaries in this way until the class understand. It may be useful to write these down on the board as this happens. Setting boundaries may take about ten minutes, but it is worthwhile. Another approach would be to set this up as a group discussion.

Teacher: Now that we’ve gone through the behaviour I expect in my lessons, I’m going to give out the exercise books. When you get your book I want you to write the following information on the front cover as neatly as you can. (She has this information on her whiteboard for them to copy: the subject; her name; the student’s name and class.) When you’ve finished doing that, sit quietly and wait for the next instruction. Any questions? No? Okay, who would like to volunteer to give out some books? Danny has his hand up and is sitting quietly, so does Claire.

COMMENT: The teacher has given clear instructions to the students and ensured that they get this right by using the whiteboard. She has also told them what they should do when they have finished - the students will complete this task at different rates. She has chosen to ‘reward’ the two students who are following her instructions by asking them to give out the books.
(They give the books out. While the students are filling in the front cover the teacher walks around and checks that they are doing it correctly.)

Teacher: Now, before we start writing in our new books, I'd like to talk to you about how you should set out your work in them and how you should treat them. I'd like us to find about five rules to go in the very front. Can anyone put their hand up with an idea? Yes, Chirag?

Chirag: We should write as neatly as we can, Miss.

Teacher: Very good, Chirag. Jenny, can you tell me why you think this is important?

Jenny: So that you can read it, Miss?

Teacher: That's right. It's very important that I can read your work, so that I can mark it. Before we put that rule in, though, there's something that we're going to need at the top of the page. Who can suggest what it is?

COMMENT: The student has indeed offered one of the rules the teacher wants, but before they write down this particular rule she wants them to say that they should always put a title and date at the top of their work. This needs to come first, as they are going to need a title for their list of rules. She has asked a leading question to get the response she wants. She can then write the title and date on the board and the first rule, which will be 'Always put a title and the date on your work.' After this she can go back to Chirag's idea and any other rules she wants. It is useful to put rules about how to work at the front of an exercise book, so that they can be easily referred to in the future.

(Once the rules have been 'negotiated' and written up on the board, the students copy them down while the teacher moves around the classroom and checks how they are doing. After a while, some finish their work and want to know what to do next.)
COMMENT: The teacher did not let the class know what to do after they had finished. There are two options now: she could stop the whole class and let them know what the next task is, or she could let these few individuals talk for a few moments until the majority have finished.

(After a few minutes it is clear that most of the students have finished.)

Teacher: Okay, I think nearly all of you have finished now, so I’d like everyone to look this way so that I can explain what I want you to do next. Anyone who hasn’t finished can then go back to copying the rules down. (She waits until she has everyone’s attention.) Now, I’m going to set you an exercise so that I can see what you are good at and what you need help with. Put your hand up if you can remember the rule I told you about what we do when we are working individually. Yes, Rizwan.

Rizwan: We work quietly, Miss?

Teacher: That’s very good. You work in complete silence so that we can all concentrate.

(The teacher now goes through the task she wants the class to complete, writing a title and the date on the board and questioning them to make sure they have understood.)

Teacher: Right, if you look at the clock you will see that we only have 15 minutes until the end of the lesson. I’m going to give you 10 minutes to complete this task, so that we have time to clear up at the end of the lesson. Are there any questions? No? Off you go then.

(The students start to work, but one of them, Emily, starts to chat to her next door neighbour.)

Teacher: Emily, do you have a question that you’d like to ask me?

COMMENT: Roughly translated as ‘I’ve checked whether the class had any questions and they didn’t, I’ve told you we’re not going to talk while working, so why on earth have you started chatting?’ Combined with the ‘deadly stare’ this will hopefully persuade Emily to be quiet.
(Emily becomes quiet, but a few minutes later she starts to talk again.)

Teacher: Emily, I have made it perfectly clear that you are not to talk while you are working, so I am now giving you your first warning. Do you understand?

Emily: Yes, Miss.

(Emily becomes quiet again, but a few minutes later she starts chatting again to her friend, Jessica, who talks back to her.)

Teacher: Jessica, I can see that you’ve decided to talk as well, so I’m going to give you your first warning. Can you tell me what will happen after your second warning?

Jessica: A detention, Miss?

Teacher: That’s right. And it would be a real shame to get a detention in your very first lesson with me, wouldn’t it? I want you to get on with your work in silence please and stop disturbing the class. We have five minutes left everybody.

COMMENT: It is sometimes better to pick on the person who is being chatted to, rather than the one who is talking. This works because there is no point in someone talking if they are getting no response. The teacher has used this strategy and has made the sanction for ignoring her instructions very clear. It would be a shame to have to give out detentions in the very first lesson, but as it is almost time to finish, she will probably not have to do this. She has reminded the class about how much time they have left and will do this again as the time runs out.

(A few minutes later.)

Teacher: You have one minute left now, so I’d like you to try and finish off the section that you are doing. When you have finished, please close your book and make a pile in the centre of your tables. (A minute later.) Okay, time’s up, please stop and put your books in the middle of the
table. Can I have two volunteers to collect the books in please? (*Lots of hands go up and the teacher chooses two students.*)

(*When the books have been collected in, the teacher stands with her arms folded and waits for silence. She has overrun a little and the buzzer for break goes, but she does not move. Eventually the students become silent, the more observant ones 'shushing' the others.*)

**COMMENT:** It is really important to have an orderly end to the lesson, as it ensures the students go away in a calm frame of mind. They will hopefully remember your excellent classroom control for the next lesson. The teacher is fortunate that it is break next, as the students are keen to go out to play. If it was not, she would have problems because she would be making them late for their next lesson. It is much better to end too early, rather than too late. You can always 'string out' the standing behind chairs exercise (see Chapter 1) by allowing one group at a time to push their chairs in and then 'practise' standing in silence.

Teacher: Right, as you can hear, the buzzer for break has gone, but I have a couple of things to say to you before we go, so can I have everyone looking at me? (*She waits a moment.*) Now, first of all I'd like to say that you've behaved yourselves well this lesson and we've got through all those administrative tasks that I wanted to complete — well done. However, next time I see you I want you to sit in alphabetical order again so that I can carry on learning your names. Secondly, at the end of every lesson with me I will ask you to stand behind your chairs. When everyone is standing still and silent behind their chairs I will dismiss you one group at a time. (*Some of the students go to stand behind their chairs.*) I don't believe I heard anyone say 'stand behind your chairs' did I? Please sit back down. (*She waits for them to do so.*) Okay, please stand quietly behind your chairs.

(*When they are all standing silent and ready she dismisses them, one group at a time, choosing the best-behaved and quietest group first.*)
COMMENT: The teacher has praised the class to reinforce the behaviour they have learned. She has also restated the aim of the lesson so that the students understand what they have achieved. It may seem petty to make them sit back down, but it shows the class that they must wait for the teacher’s command. By dismissing the best-behaved group first, she is making a point about who will receive the rewards in her lessons.

Lessons for the tired teacher

In your first term of teaching, you will probably be full of enthusiasm and energy, rising happily to the challenge of any problems that crop up. However, towards the end of this term you may well find yourself feeling both physically and emotionally drained. At this point I would like to offer a few suggestions for lessons that will give variety to your teaching and give you a rest at the same time. Although these are not lessons that you would use every day of the week, there is no need to feel guilty when you do need a bit of a break.

The important idea is that it is the students who should be doing the work, rather than you. Teacher-led lessons tend to be the most intensive; group work can be noisy; individual exercises tend to be the least stressful approach. This is not always the case, for instance in the ‘Show and tell’ activity described below. These suggestions are not subject specific and you should be able to adapt them to your own area of specialization or age range.

Look it up!

Give each child a dictionary or a textbook. Make this a competition to encourage an enthusiastic response. The children must look up the word or subject reference that you give them as quickly as possible. When they find the relevant page, they raise a hand. The ‘winner’ then reads out the meaning or passage to the rest of the class. If you have the energy, you can reward the children. One useful reward is for the winner to be given the chance to choose the next word to look up (this limits your involvement to practically nil). You can extend this exercise by asking the children to write down the definitions or passages in their exercise books. This makes the task longer and gives you more of a rest.
Time for a test
Tests are a good back-up for when you are exhausted, because they involve no teacher input beyond setting the test in the first place (and marking it afterwards). The class has to work in silence, preferably for a whole lesson. The only drawback is the marking involved afterwards; adopt one of the marking strategies described in Chapter 6 to save time.

Time for the television
Although you should avoid the temptation to show endless DVDs or television programmes to your class, there are certainly occasions when it is educationally justified. It is definitely a good way of having a 'lesson off'. If you are lucky, you may find a long DVD that takes more than one lesson to show. Ensure that the film links with the work you have been doing and make sure you book the equipment in advance. If possible, set up the equipment before your students arrive, so that you are fully prepared and sure that it will work.

Private reading
Private reading works well with younger children but can also be successful with well-motivated older students. Basically, it involves them sitting in silence reading a book. You might plan this for a specific lesson each week, perhaps on a Friday when you (and they) are tired. The children could bring in their own books related to a topic you are studying. Make sure that you have back-up copies as some students may forget to bring their own books, or may not have access to them. Depending on your viewpoint, and the motivation of the children you teach, you may also feel that it is acceptable for them to read magazines or newspapers during this private reading time.

A library visit
If you are lucky enough to have a good library in your school, and a helpful librarian, you could plan some library visits for your students where you ask them to research information relating to their work. Alternatively, your library may run an induction programme at the start of the school year, and you could book your class into this. One of the basic rules of a library is that the children must be silent, so this is restful for you (and for them).

Computers
Many schools now have a suite of computers that teachers can book to
use with a class. The first few lessons in a computer room may be stressful, particularly if you have to induct the children yourself. However, once they are confident about using the computers they will settle quickly to work and will happily stare silently at the computer screens, busily typing away. You can use the chance to visit a computer room as a reward, or build it into a scheme of work, so that you visit on a regular basis, perhaps once a week.

There is a wide range of work that can be done on computers. In a maths lesson the children could learn how to set up a database; you could do graphics and design work in an art lesson; in geography class the children could do map-based exercises. There are also many educational programmes available, for instance to improve spelling. The internet also gives your students access to material on a huge variety of subjects.

Project work
Projects take time to complete and require the children to work independently. You could allow the students to choose their own activities for the project, or you could provide a list of tasks that they must complete. This works best with a well-motivated class, who are able to work on their own; projects can prove quite stressful if you have a class who are constantly going off task. You could combine project work with visits to the library and the computer room.

Show and tell
Although this is generally regarded as a pre-school or drama activity, it can be adapted to most subjects. A version of this is popular with very young children, who love to ‘show’ and ‘tell’ about something they have brought in from home. With older students, your show and tell could involve spending part of the lesson time preparing a presentation or performance that they then show to the rest of the class. This keeps your involvement to a minimum, and you will have the opportunity to assess their oral work during the lesson.

Dealing with differentiation
In my opinion differentiation is rather like close marking: all very well in theory, but not always practical for the hard-working teacher. No doubt you will have explored all the types of differentiation at college, and tried them out with your students. However, now you have a ‘real’
job and all the extras that come with it: a busy timetable, marking to complete, reports to write, forms to fill out, parents’ evenings, meetings to attend, and so on. Realistically, you will not be able to differentiate every piece of work you set, unless you are willing to plan and prepare resources until midnight every night.

On the other hand, differentiation is important, particularly for your least able children. If the work doesn't suit their needs, they are likely to go off task and start messing around. Here are some tips about how you can do your best with differentiation:

◆ **Focus on what really matters:** Because it is not possible to differentiate for every single child that you teach, it becomes a matter of focusing your efforts where they will make the most difference. It might be that you have a child in your class who is really struggling because of severe special needs; it could be that you have a small group of students who show a very high level of aptitude for maths or science. Working out where to focus your efforts is an important part of dealing with differentiation.

◆ **Get help from support staff:** If you work with a classroom assistant, or with a support assistant, ensure that you elicit his or her help in differentiating the work. It could be that you create a worksheet then ask your assistant to develop a simplified version for children who have difficulties with literacy.

◆ **Plan for extension tasks:** A few children will always finish the work more quickly than others, so planning extension tasks is really important. When you plan, include a few more complex extension activities for those who regularly finish the work early.

◆ **Develop partnerships among your children:** Children are often very good at working together and supporting each other. For instance, it might be that a child who has finished the work very quickly could, on occasion, offer support and help to a weaker classmate. Helping another student in this way will be beneficial for your children’s social skills and will also help them retain the learning.

◆ **Set differentiated homeworks:** For the very brightest children, homework is a time when real progress can be made, because they spend as long as they wish on the tasks. You might offer a selection of different activities for homework, letting your children have the choice of which to complete. Alternatively, you could specify who must complete the more difficult tasks.
Finding resources

Resources are a brilliant way of spicing up lessons, improving the learning that takes place and making the work more engaging for your students. When you start at your school, check what resources are already available – they may be very useful to you and save you replicating work that has already been done. However, you may equally well find that they consist of outdated worksheets or textbooks that are difficult to access and impossible to use effectively.

Ask other teachers in your department or key stage if they have any recently prepared resources on the subjects you are covering. Teachers are usually flattered and keen to offer good material if you are enthusiastic and willing to give your own ideas in return. Look on the internet for resources such as worksheets that you can download for free. If you do make your own worksheets, present them as well as possible, as this will encourage the students to use them properly.

Remember that resources come in many shapes and sizes: a resource is anything that a teacher brings into the lesson to aid the students’ learning. Children respond particularly well to unusual resources, ones that challenge them to use their creativity and imagination. Below are lots of ideas for original and interesting resources.

Objects

Children love it when a teacher brings objects, unusual or even common, into the classroom. Objects are used frequently in science, art and technology lessons, but this is by no means the only time they can be used. For instance, an English teacher working on Romeo and Juliet might bring in the ‘evidence’ found at the murder scene. This would include the poison taken by Juliet, the Friar’s letter to Romeo, and so on. The students could examine the evidence as detectives, to work out what happened. In a languages lesson, you might set up a market in the classroom and ask the students to buy different types of food using the correct vocabulary.

In primary schools, teachers seem to use a greater range of props and objects in their daily teaching, especially lower down the school. Here, too, objects open up a world of interesting possibilities. A jewellery box could become a magic object that holds the key to another world, but which can only be opened with the right spell; a selection of different hats or bags could help you in developing characters for a story.
The library/ICT
The school library and ICT resources (CD-Roms, the internet) are very useful resources. Embarrassingly, you will probably find that the students are far more at home with the latest technology than you are. Before using ICT resources, get acquainted with the available material, so that you can organize what is going to be learned ahead of time. When using the internet, it can be helpful to create a list of useful websites, rather than letting your students waste hours surfing the net.

Other adults
Students respond very well to anyone who they perceive as an expert: a poet, a dentist, a company director, an engineer, a designer. Find out if any of your children have parents or carers who are willing to come in and do a session with your class. Other adults provide excellent role models for your students: a female bricklayer or a male dressmaker would challenge stereotypes. Seeing adults who have other jobs (i.e. other than teachers) gives your students something concrete to aim for beyond school.

In the primary school, teachers can make good use of parental offers of help, for instance in hearing readers or in helping supervise a school trip. Make a point of asking the children’s carers if they would be willing to give up some time to help you – you will probably find that they are flattered and delighted to be asked.

You might also ask whether any other teachers at your school are willing to swap expertise – an art specialist might come into your science lesson to talk about drawing, while you give the art class some information about human anatomy.

Other students
Some fantastic results can be achieved when older students work with their younger counterparts. You might find some sixth form students who are willing to come and assist you in a Year 7 classroom. In the primary school, you might organize a group of Year 6 students to work with Year 1 children on practising their reading skills. This cross-school interaction is very helpful for developing many skills outside the traditional curriculum, such as socialization and confidence.

Using displays
Classroom displays are an essential part of the learning experience for
your children: they celebrate the students’ work and provide information on a variety of topics. Although they take time to prepare and present, they are typically very worthwhile. These days the Workload Agreement means that, in theory, displays are no longer part of your role. It might, however, be something you still want to get involved with – it is certainly a very creative part of school life.

Displays play an important part in creating a good working environment for your students. The children will respond far better to your lessons (and should give you an easier time) if they feel you really care about what they are doing and the place where they have to work. Displays can make the room feel like a happier and more positive place to be. When I visit schools to deliver INSET sessions, I can get a very good feel for what the place is like simply by looking at the type and quality of the displays on the walls. Consider the following suggestions and comments when creating classroom displays:

◆ **Change displays regularly:** It’s not good to see classrooms where displays are torn, falling down or have graffiti on them; it would probably be better for there to be no displays at all. If possible, change your displays every half-term, or at least every term. Perhaps use a rota system where you always have one class or group working on creating a display and you take down the oldest or tattiest display to make room for the new one.

◆ **Avoid ‘wallpaper’ displays:** This is not to say that displays should be viewed as ‘wallpaper’ – something put up to decorate the walls (or hide their condition). In some schools, as an open evening approaches, or as the arrival of inspectors becomes imminent, a frenzy of display work takes place (display work that then stays up for the rest of the school year). Students recognize this type of display for what it is: a promotion of the school rather than something done for their benefit. Display work should always be a celebration of what is currently going on in the classroom. It will take a while for you to fill your walls at the start of term, but this is not a problem.

◆ **Make it worthwhile:** Only put up work that is worth displaying, perhaps because it is artistically attractive, because it is worth reading or because it displays a particularly good effort by a weaker child. Try not to put up lots of copies of very similar things, for instance a whole class-worth of the same piece of work. You might help weaker children redraft a piece for display if they have a problem with spelling.
- **Interactive displays:** Aim to make your displays interactive and if possible three-dimensional. This encourages the children to respond to and interact with them. For instance, you could create displays with questions inviting a response, or displays that have lift-up flaps. There are many opportunities for creating three-dimensional displays: a model of the solar system for science, a set of masks for drama, a fireworks display for history. If you find it hard to come up with ideas of your own, ask an art specialist or the children themselves for suggestions.

- **By and for the students:** It is tempting to put displays up yourself to ensure they are neat. However, displays will elicit a more positive response if the students have been involved in creating them. There is no reason why displays should not be created during lesson time.

- **Part of the learning experience:** Treat displays as part of the children's learning. This will happen automatically if they are connected closely to the work the children are doing. Displays don't always have to come at the end of a topic or subject, as a demonstration of what has been learned. They can be used as a kind of 'working wall', which you add to or refer to during your lessons. Your displays might also include preprinted material. For instance, a map of your area would be helpful for a class studying the local environment.

- **A motivating factor:** There is something very rewarding about seeing a piece of work that you have done being displayed on a wall for everyone to see. Try putting yourself in the children's shoes and thinking about how good this would make you feel. You will motivate the children whose work is on the wall, and also the rest of the class and other children who use the room, as well as pleasing any parents who visit the classroom.

- **Keep displays tidy:** Whenever it occurs to you, take a few moments to tidy up the displays in your room, or delegate this job to the students. It can be disheartening when students do not treat displays with the respect they deserve, but at least it shows them interacting with the work. By their very nature, displays will become damaged as the students bump into them; accept the need to tidy them up on occasion.
Assessment

Assessment forms a key part of teaching and learning, both for the teacher and for the students. You need to understand the kind of level at which your children are working, and how well they understand the topic you are covering, in order to plan how best to teach them. Your children need to know how well they are doing, both in order to stay motivated, and also to help them understand how they might progress further.

You can find lots of tips about formal assessment in Chapters 6 and 7, including advice on marking work and dealing with exams. Below are some general thoughts about assessment and the role it plays in your classroom:

◆ You will be assessing your students pretty much all the time — as you ask a question of the class and gain a response, or as you walk around the room checking books.
◆ These informal (and often subconscious) assessments will give you a feel for how each child is progressing.
◆ Encourage your students to understand what they are trying to achieve, and how they can go about doing this.
◆ Let your children know that it is a shared process — use inclusive language and plenty of rewards to keep them on track.
◆ Don't simply focus on academic achievement; remember to praise and highlight emotional and social success as well.
◆ Encourage your students to assess each other, and to share effective ways of working and improving.

Taking care of yourself

In many ways, teaching is like acting. You are performing to an audience of children, and you have to be in character as a teacher all or most of the time. There will be times when you do not feel like playing your part, but you have no choice — the students are there and waiting for your words of wisdom. This can become very tiring: after all, no actor is expected to perform on stage for over five hours a day, every day of the week. How can you prevent the tiredness that you will experience? Here are some ideas to help you avoid and cope with exhaustion during your first year:

◆ Take your breaks: The temptation to work through break-time and lunch is incredibly strong and I can easily see why some teachers
do this. You know that the work you have to do (and there is always work waiting to be done) will still be there after school. Why not try to get some of it done in your breaks so you can go home earlier? You may have detentions that have to be supervised, or students who need to talk to you about their work.

I would suggest that you are ruthless with yourself about taking your breaks. On the majority of days, aim to go for a drink in the staffroom before school starts, try to get there at break-time, and have as full a lunch break as you can. There are some very good reasons why you should do this. You need to let yourself rest during the day – you will not teach properly if you are tired and irritable. You also need to spend time with other staff: they are a vital part of your support system and there is little chance to get to know them unless you go to the staffroom. It is also good for you to have some adult company, a chance to have a laugh or a moan. Rest time is never wasted time.

Take sick leave: If you are ill, do not come into school. You are not indispensable, you do not want to pass on your illness to other teachers, you can afford to take a day off. Sometimes you know in advance that you are going to need a day off, for instance if you feel progressively sicker during the day. If this happens, and you feel you really have to, take some marking home with you (although having a good rest would be a better idea).

Be a quiet teacher: A musician’s tool is an instrument: it can be replaced if it gets broken. Your voice is your tool and you must take care of it, because you only have one and it cannot be replaced. Avoid shouting as far as is humanly possible, and talk quietly, in a relaxed tone. Don’t do too much ‘chalk and talk’-style teaching – make the children do the work as often as appropriate.

Make the most of your holidays: One of the best perks of a teaching job is undoubtedly the holidays. Use them for the most appropriate reason – to take a break. At the end of term you will feel physically and emotionally exhausted. Avoid the overwhelming temptation to catch up on all that marking and planning you never have time to do. Remember, your job will expand to fit the amount of time you are willing to devote to it. Be ruthless with yourself and plan a proper holiday – you will feel much better for it when the next term begins.
One of your key responsibilities, beyond delivering the curriculum, is for the pastoral well-being of your children. If you're a primary school teacher, this pastoral duty will be for the children in your class. If you're a secondary school teacher, you will probably have pastoral responsibility for a form or tutor group. Although at times pastoral work can seem like one more burden to cope with, this side of the job is very rewarding. It feeds into the teaching and learning that you do, by helping you build up strong relationships with a group of students. This chapter gives you lots of tips and advice about the pastoral side of the job.

Your pastoral responsibilities

The pastoral responsibilities of the primary teacher or form tutor cover a wide range of areas, including administrative, welfare and social issues. Right from the start of term, you will be in charge of your children's overall welfare and their progress at school. You will have to do jobs such as taking the register, supervising the use of student diaries, helping children new to the school settle in and so on. All this responsibility can seem quite daunting, but it is a very valuable and enjoyable part of a teacher's work. In some secondary schools, NQTs are not allocated a tutor group, or are given a co-tutor with whom they can work while learning the ropes.

First-year students

If you have a nursery or reception class, or a first-year (Year 7) form group in a secondary school, your main responsibility at the beginning of term is to ensure that your children settle in quickly and have all the information that they need. The following list of suggestions will help you prepare for the issues you and your students might encounter:
Helping the anxious child: Some of your children may need a lot of reassurance and comforting at the start of term. Starting at primary or secondary school can be a difficult experience, and you could find yourself acting as a kind of surrogate parent for the first few days and weeks of the academic year. Keep an eye out for any children who are not settling in – this includes the quiet, withdrawn child, as well as those who display their anxiety more openly.

Finding the way around: First-year students will be unsure of the layout of the buildings, and will need help in orientating themselves. Your school should issue you with maps – work through these with your students. This has the added bonus of helping you find your way around. Make sure that the children know the location of the most important areas: the toilets, the class or form room, the assembly hall, the dining room, the student reception and so on.

Understanding the school day: At first, the timings and arrangements of the school day will be very confusing for new students. They will need to be shown how the timetable works, when breaks take place, how long they are and so on. One of the biggest changes for students starting at a secondary school is the fact that they have many different subjects, with a different teacher and a different classroom for each one. Spend time going over this with your form group right at the beginning of term.

Using a student diary: Many schools now use student diaries; the class teacher or form tutor needs to hand these out, get them labelled and explain to the children how to use them. Make sure you take a good look at the diary before the term starts, so that you are aware of exactly what is in it. Go through the different sections of the diary, discussing how it should be used. Ensure that you give the students time to write or stick their timetables into their diaries, so they do not get lost. Form tutors should receive two copies of each timetable, one to give to the students and one for your own reference.

Admin jobs: The National Agreement has cut administrative demands on the teacher. In theory, you should not be routinely required to take on admin and clerical-type duties, such as collecting money or chasing absence. In reality, there may be times when you do have to complete some admin jobs for your class or tutor group.
Many schools have some kind of staggered start to the first term. In a primary school, the nursery/reception-aged children might start with half days before going full time later in the term. In a secondary school, the first-years might begin a day or two before the older students return.

**Finding out about your students**

It can be surprisingly difficult, and time consuming, to get access to the information you need about your children. When I first started teaching, I had assumed I would get a folder with lots of details about my new form group. I discovered that if I wanted to get hold of information, I often had to chase it up myself.

Be aware that there are often confidentiality issues involved. Your SENCO might be able to give you general advice about dealing with a child, but not be allowed to go into specifics.

◆ *Contact information:* Your children, or their carers, will probably be asked to fill in a contact details sheet at the start of term. Alternatively, you may find that this information is written at the front of your register, or that the school office is able to give you any contact details you require.

◆ *Special educational needs:* Some students may have special educational needs (SEN) and it is important that you find out about this as soon as possible. In the secondary school you could talk with special needs staff or with your pastoral manager. They should have access to material on the students from their previous schools (or, if they are not first-years, from previous years at your school). In the primary school, the situation may be more complicated, as many special needs will not yet have been identified.

During the year, you may be involved in assessing children in your class for special needs. This assessment may involve making an initial identification of children who you feel are experiencing difficulties, or checking the progress of those with special needs by looking at their attainment in different subjects.

If you are concerned that a child might have unidentified special needs, don’t assume that ‘someone else’ will pick up on it. Make a point of chasing this up yourself – too many children go through school with problems, without anyone ever picking up on it.

◆ *Child protection issues:* There could be children in your class or form group who have welfare issues that are not connected to their
learning. Find out as soon as possible who the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) is at your school. This person is responsible for dealing with any child protection issues. If you do have concerns about a child in your class, talk to the CPO as soon as possible. Again, don’t assume that ‘someone else’ will do it.

The register
The register is a legal document, and it is important that you fill it in correctly. Schools use a variety of different formats for their registers: the traditional green-covered register, the computerized SIMs format, the hand-held keypad system. Make sure you get some guidance early on about how to fill in or use your register. You may find that nobody offers to go through this with you – if this happens, please ask! Here are some general points about using your register:

- **Filling in the dates:** The office staff should fill in the term dates for you in a traditional register. If not, you will need to do this yourself, but be careful not to make a mistake. Ask an experienced member of staff (or someone in the school office) if you are not sure. You should include half-terms and training days in your dates. If your school uses one of the computerized formats, there will be no need for you to do this.

- **Marking present or absent:** When you are taking the register, a student is either absent (shown with a blank or an empty circle) or present (marked with a line). With a traditional register, check which colour pens your school wants you to use (probably black for present and red for absent). With the SIMs format, an HB pencil is normally used.

- **Absence letters, patterns and truancy:** Before the National Agreement, the class teacher/form tutor was expected to chase for confirmation of absence from parents or carers. Even though this is no longer your responsibility, do check that a child’s absence is being followed up by the appropriate staff. This is especially important if there is a clear pattern to the absences, if you have general concerns about the child’s ongoing health, or if you suspect truancy. Report any concerns to your Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) or CPO.

- **The register and assembly:** Depending on the size and structure of your school, you will probably have an assembly with your class at least one day a week. You may be asked to take the register during this assembly. If you seat your students in alphabetical
order in assemblies, it is much easier to mark the register. You can also work on learning their names: this can be a real difficulty for secondary school tutors who do not teach their form group.

The student diary
Student diaries are a really useful way of communicating with parents, carers or with other teachers. In primary schools this is sometimes called a ‘reading diary’ and this usually goes in the child’s book bag each night. Students can write down their homework and other important details in the diary; teachers can enter merits, detentions, general comments, reading tasks; parents can communicate with the teacher. The school will usually ask the student’s parents or guardians to check the diaries regularly and sign or write in them. Here are some tips about supervising the use of student diaries with your class or form group:

- **Go through the format with the class:** When you hand out the diaries at the start of the year, spend time going through them with your group. Look at the different sections, talking about what information should be kept in each place. Give your children useful hints about how best to use the diary, for instance crossing off homework as it is done.

- **Check them regularly:** Try to have a regular time when you check diaries, and stick to this. With a primary school reading diary, this might be as often as every day. In a secondary school, look over the student diaries at least once a week to ensure they are being used properly. This check-up could take place during an assembly. Check the rewards and detentions pages, and ensure that the parent or guardian has seen and signed the diary. Give positive comments to any children with lots of rewards in their diaries.

- **Use the diary as an early warning system:** If a child is receiving a lot of detentions, find a time early on to talk to them about why this is happening. Is there a particular pattern of behaviour developing, or do they appear to have a problem with a specific subject or teacher? If a student is not recording homework in sufficient detail, or does not seem to be set much homework, follow up on this. If a parent is not using the reading diary, consider having a quick word to see if there are any issues with supporting the child at home.

- **Watch out for student tricks:** Some secondary students will have picked up diary-related tricks. Watch out for: diaries getting ‘lost’ when the detention pages are full; students who get themselves
two diaries – one for detentions, the second a ‘clean’ one; forged parental signatures. To deter this, your school might charge a fee for each new diary, or you could keep a list of who receives one and when.

Contact with parents or guardians
Many primary school teachers, particularly lower down the school, will see the parents or carers on a daily basis, when they drop the child off at school. If appropriate, this can be the perfect opportunity to have a quick word about a child’s progress or about any behavioural issues. If you prefer not to talk at the start or end of the school day, set up an appointment to meet at a more convenient time.

Secondary school teachers typically have little contact with the student’s home, apart from through letters and student diaries. As a form tutor you may find that you only ever speak to parents or guardians on the phone, or meet them at parents’ evenings. Your school may organize an information evening for new students, and this is a worthwhile way of meeting parents. You will also be communicating with them through subject reports.

Reports
The school report offers an excellent way of communicating with the home and of showing parents how and where the child is progressing (or not). In the primary school, the class teacher will be responsible for reporting on all areas of his or her class’s achievement. You will need to comment on the different subjects being studied, as well as on the child’s attitude, behaviour and so on.

In the secondary school, one of the most time-consuming aspects of the role of a form tutor comes when reports are due. Tutors need to look at the different subject reports, and make an overall comment about each tutee’s progress. Once again, the National Agreement does mean that you should not have to collate or proofread reports. If your school has a system where students take their own reports home with them, check that reports actually make it to the parents. If any children have proved particularly unreliable (or have a very poor report that they might not want their parents or carers to see), it might be best to post the report rather than give it to the child.

Social and personal issues
One of the most important (and satisfying) parts of being a primary teacher or a form tutor is dealing with any social and personal issues
that arise. This can be challenging, though, both for the NQT and for the more experienced teacher. We want the best for the children in our care, and it can be upsetting if they are being ill-treated, either at school or in the home. Most incidents will, thankfully, be minor ones such as friendships breaking up or name calling (although these often seem very serious indeed to the child involved). Sadly, though, there are some children who suffer serious neglect or worse. Here are some tips about dealing with social and personal issues:

- **Get help with serious issues**: More serious issues should always be dealt with in partnership with more experienced or senior teachers. If you have any suspicions about a child's welfare, refer the situation to your CPO straight away. There will be occasions when a student simply needs to talk to someone about something that is worrying them; use your judgement to decide when a higher-level intervention is appropriate. If you are at all unsure, talk with a more experienced colleague about what to do.

- **Offer an 'open door' policy**: At the start of your time with the class or form group, make it clear that they can come and talk to you privately if they ever need your help. In the primary school you will rapidly develop a very close relationship with each member of your class. In the secondary school, the children may feel closer to a subject teacher, someone they spend more time with. If a child does approach you for help, try and make time to talk. If it is not possible for this to happen during tutor or class time, let the child know where you will be at break-time or after school.

- **Provide a shoulder to cry on**: Often students will just want someone to listen to their problems – a shoulder to cry on. You may find children come to you about friendship problems, or with minor worries about school or home. Sometimes, all that is required is for you to listen. If you feel that you cannot deal with the child’s problem effectively on your own, or if you are concerned that he or she is perhaps depressed or overly anxious, refer the child to a school counsellor or similar.

- **Be a neutral observer**: Give your group the sense that you care about how they behave in all their lessons and that you really want them to succeed at school. The secondary tutor can act as a kind of neutral observer, offering an overview of their behaviour or progress at school.
House/year group systems
When I started teaching, year groups were all the rage; these days, many schools are reintroducing a stronger house system, and some are using vertical groupings. With the year group approach, the children are divided according to their age, and the year group team will consist of all the tutors working together under a head of year. Often, a house system is ‘tacked on’ to this, so that all students belong to a house for sporting events, etc. With a house system, students are placed into a house and the ‘team’ of both children and staff is not dependent on being in a particular year group. With vertical groupings, tutor groups are made up of students of different ages.

The role of the pastoral manager
In the secondary school an experienced teacher will work as head of year or house, managing the form tutors and overseeing the welfare and progress of a large group of children in one year or house group. Primary schools with several classes in each year will have a similar manager working as year group co-ordinator. You should refer any difficult or serious problems to this person – a written referral is more helpful than a quick chat during a spare moment, as the manager then has the evidence required to take the matter further.

Do the best pastoral job you can, but be careful not to take on extra work that is not really yours, particularly when you are an NQT. You may wish to attend special needs meetings that concern a student from your group, as these give you additional insight into their problems, but there is normally no compulsion to do this. If you are experiencing severe difficulties with your form group, perhaps in maintaining reasonable behaviour, ask your pastoral manager for help and support.

Developing your role
It is up to you how far you want to take the pastoral side of your role. In the primary school, because of your close relationship with a single class, you will probably find the curriculum and pastoral aspects of your work intermingling. It is a good idea to develop the sense of your class as a team who are keen to work and learn together, as this will feed into your classroom teaching. In the secondary school you will be spending less time with your tutor group, but you will probably still develop a
strong relationship with them. There are various ways of motivating your class or form group and making them feel like a team:

- **Competitions:** You might organize a competition to see who can achieve the most merit marks or rewards. You may find that your school runs its own competitions, for instance to sell tickets to a Christmas market or a noticeboard competition between classes. There might also be competitions for the best record of attendance and punctuality.

- **The class/form noticeboard:** A good way to motivate your group and keep them informed is to have a well-organized noticeboard in your room. Depending on the age of the students, they could design and make this themselves, or with your help. The noticeboard could include your name, the name of your group, a list of the school rules, names of the children in the group, their 'baby pictures', details of forthcoming events, etc.

- **Special occasions:** An effective way to make your class or form feel special is to give them birthday cards, or cards to mark other special occasions such as Christmas or Divali. A couple of warnings: you will have to buy or make the cards yourself, and you must remember to give every single student a card. Many teachers give out small presents to celebrate the end of term. Primary teachers (and some lucky secondary tutors) will get presents from the children in return.

- **Admin tasks:** One of the most time-consuming tasks in a form group is getting them to hand things in, for instance return slips on reports, absence letters, and so on. Although in theory chasing these is not your role, you could help admin staff by motivating the children to get them back. You might give merits (or some other reward) to those who hand things in the next day; you could give out detentions for those who repeatedly fail to bring them in.
III Climbing the Paper Mountain
When you first start out as a teacher, you will inevitably find it hard to balance what goes on in the classroom with all the peripheral aspects of the job. This difficulty applies particularly to paperwork and marking. Dealing with form filling and marking books can take up huge quantities of your time outside the classroom, time that might be better devoted to tasks such as planning and offering pastoral care.

For many new teachers, the paper-based parts of the job can seem almost overwhelming. You might find yourself using up huge quantities of time in a seemingly endless quest to 'finish' that pile of unfilled forms or unmarked books. Work is taken home on evenings and at weekends, and stress levels rise as you feel your home life is being affected by the demands of school work. The secret, as with much of teaching, is to find a balance that works for you and your children. This chapter, and the one that follows, will help you in the difficult job of 'climbing the paper mountain'.

**Dealing with paperwork**

One of the most time-consuming tasks faced by teachers is dealing with the mountains of paper that pass through their hands. Some of this paperwork is essential or very important, for instance reports and SEN forms. Unfortunately it is also true that the school for which you work, and the government of the day, will be willing participants in adding to your workload. How do you deal with this potentially time-wasting aspect of the job? Following the three rules given below should help you keep the paperwork to a minimum.

**The first rule: ‘B’ is for bin**

Apply this rule to every piece of paper that you receive, follow it as ruthlessly as you can, and your pile of important paperwork will stay
quite small. The rule goes as follows: as each piece of paper arrives in your pigeon-hole, ask yourself the question: 'Does the thought of throwing this away make me want to cry?' If the answer is 'No', recycle it immediately. In schools, if you make a mistake and throw away something important, someone else always has a copy.

There are many examples of paper that can end up in the bin. After reading the agenda for a meeting and attending the meeting itself, there is little point in keeping your copy of the agenda. If there is centralized documentation that is easily accessible, you will not need to keep copies of your own. Examples might include department handbooks, duty rotas, peripheral school policies, and so on.

The second rule: File it, deal with it or pass it on
Apply this rule to all the paper that is left over after you've followed the first rule. Once you have weeded out the non-essential paperwork there are three options to consider for what is left: file it, deal with it or pass it on.

1. **File it.** Be wary of this one. The thought that 'I might use it or need it again' is the way those mountains of paper start to build up. File only what is essential (see The third rule' below to decide what to file).

2. **Deal with it.** The best option, faced with any piece of paper that requires a response or action of some type, is to deal with it straight away. You can then move straight on to option (3) with the leftovers. If you don't feel confident about dealing with it, check immediately with somebody else what you should do. If you feel the piece of paper requires a more considered response, by all means take your time, but avoid having a pile of papers 'to be done'. When, exactly, are you going to 'do' them?

3. **Pass it on.** Always the preferred option, as it means your paperwork becomes somebody else's problem. Whenever possible, for instance when filling out forms about children with special needs, do not agonize about what you are going to write. Fill the form in that instant and pass it on. It is far better to do this than to be one of those teachers with piles of forms on their desks that will never get filled in. If you do it wrong nobody is going to blame you; you have only just started teaching, and the person can always come back to you if it needs changing.
The third rule: Will I use it again?
Finally, the third rule deals with everything left over after you have followed rules (1) and (2). Be honest with yourself. If you have made a photocopiable resource, keep a copy, but make sure it is easily accessible. If it is not, you will only end up making it again at some point in the future. A useful approach is to file one copy of each worksheet in a plastic folder so that you can take it out easily to photocopy. When filing, divide your resources into those for different topics, schemes or year groups.

A computer is the ideal place to store resources, as it makes searching for and printing them out a very simple task. Be wary about storing resources on a school computer: they may well disappear or at the very least get lost among the work of other teachers. If you use a school computer, set up your own folder in which to store your work.

Marking: a balancing act
Marking is, like many aspects of teaching, a job that expands to meet the amount of time you are willing or able to devote to it. On teaching practice, it is likely that your timetable was only a fraction of that of a full-time teacher and you had plenty of (or at least enough) time for planning and checking your students' work. Now you have to deal not only with teaching and marking, but also with all the other tasks that come with the job, including writing reports and attending meetings. It is now that you find out just how much of a balancing act marking really is.

You might have heard complaints from those outside the teaching profession that teachers ’do not bother’ to correct mistakes in their students’ work. This is not necessarily true; it is more a result of the fact that close marking takes a great deal of time. If a teacher were to close mark a three-page piece of work, adding lots of comments and corrections, it could take up to half an hour or more. Multiply this by an average of 25 or 30 students in a class, then by the number of subjects or classes the teacher has to teach and you will see why this is impossible. Teachers may have a shorter working day than other professionals, but a marking load of over 100 hours a week is not realistic. Teachers have to make difficult decisions about marking. Some of these are covered below:
Balancing marking with other parts of the job: Early on, you need to decide how you are going to balance the importance of checking your children’s work with the equal necessity to plan lessons, make resources, create displays and so on. There are no hard and fast rules to follow, and it is tempting to feel that the books must ‘look’ marked. Learn to question the real value of different marking methods in terms of your children’s educational achievement.

Deciding on your priorities: For the primary teacher, decisions need to be made about marking in different subjects, and whether some areas have priority over others. For the secondary teacher, it is a case of deciding which classes are most important at any one time: for instance, coursework from an examination year class needs to be checked carefully.

Maintaining a home/work balance: Realistically, there is no way that you can complete close and detailed marking at school. You must decide whether you are willing to spend evenings and weekends finishing it at home. Ensure that your work life does not take over your home life – you will not be an effective teacher in the classroom if you are tired and pressurized from working outside of school.

The options

Teachers mark work in a wide variety of ways. The marking style you choose also depends on the age range and subjects you teach. There is no harm in experimenting with different marking methods to see how effective you believe each one to be. Your choice of how to mark will depend, too, on your educational philosophies, the policies of your department or school and how much time you are willing to spend on this task. Here are some thoughts about the different options.

Tick and flick
This type of marking is exactly as it sounds: put a big tick (or cross) on each answer, then move straight on to the next. At the end of the work there may be a brief comment, such as ‘good work’ or ‘a fair attempt’, and a grade or mark. Certain subjects or particular pieces of work demand this type of marking – for instance, a series of maths sums or a test on vocabulary learned in language lessons.

In some cases, though, this would not be the appropriate style of marking. For instance, a piece of creative writing or a long and detailed
essay could be marked in this way, but it would be a fairly meaningless
exercise and would have little value for the student. If it was clear that a
child doing a maths test had not understood the task, you would want
to write comments and give examples to show where he or she was
going wrong.

Close marking
This is what some people see as the ideal (an unrealistic ideal in many
cases). With close marking the teacher pinpoints and corrects every
error — spelling, grammar, errors of fact or working. There are
obviously advantages in this method, not least of which is that the child
sees exactly where he or she is going wrong. However, for weaker
students this style of marking can be extremely destructive. If a student
has worked hard on a piece, and it is then covered in red ink, this would
be demoralizing.

Marking for specific errors
This approach offers a good balance between 'tick and flick' and close
marking. It also encourages the students to focus on correcting their
own work. The teacher pinpoints one area for which he or she will be
marking. Examples could include: the correct spelling of certain words
(you could give a list out beforehand); the proper use of punctuation in
a piece of writing; showing detailed working (even if the answers are
wrong); producing neat diagrams; correct use of technical terminology
and so on.

To help you differentiate, you might set different targets for
different children. This approach encourages the students to concen-
trate on specific areas of weakness and how they might be improved.

Pencil or pen?
Your school or department will probably have a specific policy that you
are asked to follow. Question the value of each option and make your
own decision. The main points to consider are:

- **Pencil**: Pencil marks are easier to change if you make a mistake but
  they are harder for the child to see and more vulnerable to
  alteration. Using a pencil suggests that the teacher's comments or
  grades are only a subjective judgement rather than a definitive one:
  the child is not necessarily right or wrong; the teacher is giving an
  opinion of the work. This is particularly useful in subjects where
  the work is imaginative rather than factual.
Pen: Pen marks are easier for the child to see, but harder for you to change if you make a mistake. Student alterations are practically impossible, although I have seen it done. Using a pen gives a stronger suggestion that the teacher is judging the child’s work and is therefore more suited to subjects with right and wrong answers. Some students actually feel more comfortable with pen marks, as they want the teacher to make a definitive judgement on their work.

Grading your students

Whether you use marks, letters, numbers or comments (or a combination) will depend on your school or departmental policies, on the subject you are teaching and on your own marking philosophy. In many instances you will want to give a final grade of some type on a piece of work, simply so that you can keep a record of how each child is doing. In some situations, though, it may be better to simply make a brief comment on the work to highlight areas of achievement and pinpoint strategies for further improvement. Consider the following points when grading your students:

- **Definitive marks**: A series of sums or a spelling test can be given a mark out of a total score, or an essay could be graded to show whether it is of A, B, C standard and so on. Many students and parents like to have a definitive mark to show their level relative to others, and in relation to the statutory requirements (for instance in SATs or GCSEs).
- **Comparing results**: With a definitive mark you can compare results between children and also over time. You might check each child’s progress from one week to the next, or check progress across the class as a whole.
- **Grading across year groups**: In the secondary school, find out whether you are supposed to grade pieces of work in relation to the student, the class, or the year group. Is a grade A in a bottom set the equivalent to a grade A in a top set?
- **The potential for demoralizing students**: Definitive grades or marks can be very off-putting for children who are struggling. If one of your weakest students tries really hard, but still produces poor results, how will he/she feel about getting a very low grade? This problem can be avoided somewhat by giving two grades, one for effort and one for attainment.
- **Honesty versus diplomacy**: You have to come to a decision about
how ruthless you are going to be about grading students (both on class work and reports). If a grade E is the lowest grade you can give, and on the report is explained as 'very poor quality of work', how willing are you to give a child this grade? There is a dilemma between being honest (and alerting parents and special needs teachers to any problems) and destroying a student’s confidence.

Some time-saving tips

There is a temptation to think of marking as something the teacher does after a lesson, for the children to look through and absorb when a piece of work is returned. However, there are some educationally sound ways of saving time with marking, for instance doing some of it within lessons. The strategies below offer you time-saving tips to help you cope with your marking load. Most of these need the students to have a reasonable level of skill in reading and writing, so are more suited to the upper end of the primary school or at secondary level.

Do-it-yourself
Before you collect in a piece of work, ask the students to check through their work themselves. This is also a useful extension activity if a few students finish an activity early. Where you know a child has problems in a particular area, ask that he or she looks for a specific type of mistake, for instance underlining any words that might have been misspelt. You could then ask the child to look up the correct spellings in a dictionary.

Do-it-together
This is very useful if you are setting a test where the answers are straightforward and can be marked right or wrong. After the test has finished go through the answers one by one with the class, perhaps writing them on your board. Ask the students to tick (or cross) their work and put a total mark at the end. If it is important that the results are accurate, ask the children to swap with a partner to guard against cheating.

What’s your opinion?
This technique is useful for pieces of work that call for an opinion rather than a mark, for instance an art or creative writing task. When the time for completing the work is up, some volunteers collect in the books or
papers and 'shuffle' them. These are then returned to someone else to mark. Give the students specific areas to mark and let them know your criteria for grading. For instance, you might ask for marks out of ten for creativity, accuracy, originality and so on. You could also ask them to write a positive comment saying what they liked about the work.

If you have time, get a second (and third) set of marks and comments from your students by swapping again. After this, the work is returned to its original owner who can read the grades and comments. I've found that students take this exercise seriously, as they like playing the role of teacher. When you collect the work in you have a ready-made set of comments to assist your own marking. Your students also learn valuable lessons about the standard of work that their peers are producing. This can be a useful motivator for those who are producing lazy or sloppy work.

**Marking in class**

In some situations it is possible to mark work in class, perhaps if students are finishing an exercise at different rates or if they are doing some private reading. This is also sometimes possible when a class is working in silence on a test (although only if you're sure that they won't start talking or cheating the minute you lower your head). I have found that it is difficult to get any meaningful marking done during lesson time because there are so many interruptions. However, if you can manage it, it will certainly save you some time.

Remember that in most subjects your marking is not just of written pieces, but of oral work as well. You could ask your students to prepare a presentation on a topic during one lesson; you can then watch and assess this in the next lesson. This exercise takes time and is also more intensive on the students than the teacher, so it gives you the chance for a rest.

**Collecting work**

Always ask your children to collect in work done in lessons for you unless there is a specific reason not to do so. This saves you time and effort and they will be perfectly willing to help – you might even introduce this as a reward. If space is tight in your classroom, make things easier by asking the students to pass their books or papers along to the ends of rows, or to pile them in the middle of the tables.
Collecting homework
Collecting in homework can be quite a tricky administrative task: you need to ensure that everyone has completed it, and administer sanctions as appropriate. This is one time when it can be best to collect the work in yourself. Here are some useful tips for getting it right:

- Before you collect in the books, ask the students to put their books in front of them, open at the page where they have done the homework. Go around the class to check that everyone has completed the task, before the books are collected in.
- If you are going to give sanctions for missing homework, ask that any students without the homework have their diaries out in front of them instead. You can then write in the detention or other sanction as you pass around the room.
- Consider when the best time is to collect in homework – this will depend on the class and age group.
- If you anticipate confrontations about uncompleted homework, it might be best to wait until the end of the lesson rather than risk disruption. Make sure you leave yourself time to write down the names of those who need to be sanctioned.
- As an alternative you might wait until the students have settled down to a long task, and then go around checking homework.
- Remember to hand out rewards to those who have completed their work to a good standard.
- If you regularly have to chase homework, you might also offer a whole-class reward when the whole class manages to bring it in. The power of positive peer pressure is often more effective than anything the teacher can do.
- Consider having a ‘get out of homework free’ card as a special treat for those students who really deserve it.

Keeping marks
It is important to keep a record of your students’ marks, so that when you come to write reports or attend a parents’ evening, you have the information at hand. (Inspectors will also want to see detailed information about grades and marks.) This is a matter of personal taste; I like to keep them in the teacher’s planner, rather than in a separate mark book.

If you’re a secondary school teacher, with a number of different
classes, you might try keeping your marks in the same section as the register for the class, perhaps on the following page. Alternatively, you could leave a free line below the register when you set a homework – that way you can see who was absent when the homework was set.
This chapter deals with the formalized types of paper-based work and assessment that you must do. You can find information here about helping your children to prepare for and take exams, and lots of tips and ideas on how to write reports. I also give a list of useful phrases for report writing that you can use to save yourself some time. In recent years, formalized assessment and reporting seems to have become a far more central part of our education system; it’s an important area to get to grips with as a new teacher.

**Exams and the NQT**

Preparing your children for exams can be a rather daunting task for the NQT. Obviously, taking (and hopefully passing) exams is a very important part of your students’ education. There may be substantial pressure to get good results – this will come from the managers at your school, and also probably from parents or carers, particularly if you are teaching in an academically successful school. The information, thoughts and ideas that follow should help you in keeping the nerves at bay, and in getting your children ready to do as well as they possibly can.

**Statutory exams**

Statutory exams are those exams that are taken by all children at a specific point in their schooling, and which are set (and often marked) by external bodies. The government of the day decides on the stage at which these assessments take place. In recent years the trend has been towards an ever-increasing statutory assessment of school children.

Whether or not your children face statutory exams during your first year of teaching will depend on the age range you are teaching, and the particular age group or groups with whom you work. As you will see
from the list below, a series of internally and externally assessed exams now take place at frequent intervals during a child’s school career:

- Year 2 – SATs (teacher assessed)
- Year 6 – SATs
- Year 9 – SATs
- Year 11 – GCSEs, NVQs
- Year 12 – AS levels
- Year 13 – A levels

In addition to formal exams, many of the statutory assessments also involve a measure of teacher input. This might take the form of a classroom assessment that the teacher must grade; it could be that the students must complete coursework or modular assessments over the course of the examination year. This side of statutory exams can mean quite a heavy addition to your paperwork and marking load.

School exams
Even if your children are not in a year group with statutory exams, most schools include a set of school exams during the academic year. These usually take place towards the end of the year, in the summer term. Again, school exams can have quite an impact on your paperwork levels, as the marking load is often substantial.

Some tips on exams
The advice that follows will help you get your students ready for their exams, whether these are statutory tests or ones set by the school. Although I would not advocate ‘teaching to the tests’, it is only fair to help your students prepare as much as possible in advance of their exams, particularly for the statutory ones.

Preparing your students
Many children feel nervous in the run-up to exams; you can help them fend off this feeling by helping them understand what to expect, and how to do well. The tips below will help you prepare your children for the big event:

- **Be well informed:** It is important to prepare your children for the specific tests or syllabus they are studying. Check carefully and
well in advance what they must do, and prepare your class for what is going to happen. Spend time reading through National Curriculum requirements, past papers, mark schemes, and so on.

- **Get help if you need it:** With a few years' experience, helping your students prepare for their exams becomes second nature. However, at this stage you may need some help and advice. Don't be embarrassed to admit that you're not exactly sure what you are meant to be doing. If you are uncertain about any aspects of the preparation or the exams themselves, ask a more experienced member of staff for assistance.

- **Get acquainted with past papers:** One of your top priorities, if you are teaching an examination year, is to look closely at the past papers (whether these are SATs papers or GCSEs, etc.). As you look at these past papers, think about the following, and communicate the information to your children:
  - how the paper is laid out;
  - the timing that applies to each section or question;
  - the marks that apply to each question;
  - whether similar questions come up each time;
  - the kind of wording that is used and what that wording asks the children to do;
  - whether certain topics tend to be repeated.

- **Do lots of practice:** Spend lots of time getting your children to take mock exams, either practical or written depending on the subject. This is important because it will train them to work quickly – one of the most useful skills in an examination – and also because it will show them just how hard (and long) exams can be. They must learn to get the timing right – point out to them that the examiner will give marks for each answer and if they do not finish the paper they will not gain any marks for the uncompleted sections.

- **Teach exam technique:** As an adult who has passed exams, you will know the best techniques for doing well in exams, so share this information with your students. Teach them not to 'waffle' or to give unnecessary detail. Encourage them to answer questions clearly and concisely. There is a great temptation for students to feel that the more they write, the better they will do. Explain that this is not necessarily so.

- **Teach memory techniques:** Where the students need to learn sections of factual information, teach them effective techniques for doing this. Tony Buzan has written some excellent books on memorization, and there is lots of useful advice on the internet.
Coursework

In the secondary school, external examinations may consist of both coursework and a final paper or papers. Here are some tips if coursework plays a part in the syllabus you are teaching:

◆ Approach your head of department for advice on how best to get coursework done.
◆ Check the deadlines for handing in essays or projects.
◆ Make sure the students and their parents are advised of these dates well ahead of time (your head of department should do this).
◆ Consider doing a formal check on work in progress, perhaps giving a series of dates to see sections of coursework, ahead of the final submission date.
◆ For those students who have difficulty completing coursework, remember that something is better than nothing. Find something to enter, even if they have not managed to complete a finished piece of work.
◆ As a back-up, you might set a mock exam in class on the coursework topic. Keep the papers handy – if a student does not submit his or her coursework in time, use the exam as a back-up piece.
◆ Students will often be withdrawn from the exam if they do not enter all the coursework required – let your class know this.
◆ Marking coursework, whether the first drafts or the final product, can take up a lot of time.
◆ This is especially true if you need to write detailed comments on the coursework to show how and where you have allocated marks.

How to pass exams

Passing (or failing) exams is often as much about how the student approaches the exam as it is to do with the individual’s abilities. It is tempting to assume that our children know how to approach and pass their exams, but in reality this is often not the case. Train your students in the skills they need to pass and do well in their exams. Here are some useful pointers about the type of training you might give:

◆ What to revise – which sections of the syllabus are most important.
◆ How to revise – making notes, memory techniques, etc.
◆ Any necessary preparatory work, e.g. for an art exam.
◆ How to use time effectively, both in revision and in the actual exams.
◆ Any skills specific to the subject, for example how to write essays, how to draw clear diagrams, how much working to show in analytical answers, etc.
◆ What equipment they should take to the exam – a pencil and ruler, a calculator, a copy of the set text, and so on.

Invigilation

Happily the National Agreement means that teachers are no longer required to routinely do invigilation of external exams. You might still be asked to invigilate internal exams, or it might be that your school takes a flexible approach to the word ‘routinely’. In any case, I’ve left the following sections in, which are taken from the first edition of this book, as they give a great flavour of my own feelings about invigilation when I was an NQT.

Think of the most boring thing you can imagine in the whole world, multiply it by 20, and you have some idea of how boring invigilation is. The summer arrives and you think: ‘Great, things are a bit quieter at this time of year, at last I’ll be able to catch up on all that paperwork.’ Think again. Now is the time of year when any free lessons (i.e. those frees created by classes on study leave or by children taking exams) are likely to be taken up by invigilation. You must stand in the hall or gym (or wherever the exams are taking place) and watch a large group of students for the duration of your normal lesson time. You cannot do marking or planning during this time, but are required to walk up and down the rows, handing out paper, answering any queries and checking that the students are not cheating.

Some of the more imaginative teachers I have met come up with various ways of making time pass quickly, and I shall leave it to you to see how inventive you can be. One word of warning: although it is rare to see members of the senior management invigilating (they know how boring it is, and anyway, they are far too busy running the school), you may find that from time to time the head or a deputy head pops in to see how the students (and teachers) are doing. At this point, you should make a determined effort to look really engrossed in the thrilling task of invigilation. Good luck!
Some tips on writing reports

Reporting to parents and carers takes many different forms: from an informal chat in the morning or on the telephone, to the more formalized written reports and parents' evenings. Schools use a very wide range of formats and styles for their written reports. Some use a computerized bank of statements for each subject from which the teacher can choose; some use a combination of tick boxes or statements for specific subject skills alongside a written teacher comment; others require the teachers to devise comments of their own. The idea and suggestions in this and the following two sections will be of most use to teachers who have to provide their own statements. If your school uses a computerized format for its reports, you could look through the phrases given in ‘Some useful phrases for reports’ and ask your manager or head of department to add some of them to your own bank of comments. Here are some initial thoughts about the whole report-writing process:

- **It's very time consuming!** In my first year as a teacher, I was amazed to discover just how time consuming it is to prepare, write and collate reports. This is particularly so if you are a secondary teacher with hundreds of different students. As you settle into your first term at school, you might get the feeling that the workload is not actually as bad as you expected; sadly, what this probably means is that report writing has not yet begun.

- **A clear form of communication:** Reports are not some kind of essay written for your college lecturer's approval; they need to communicate your thoughts to a whole range of different parents and carers, and must be written as clearly and concisely as possible.

- **It needs to look and sound professional:** The report is one of the main forms of formal communication between the school and the home. Make sure that you present them neatly and think carefully about what you are going to say. Your school will have its own rules for written reports, but generally you will find that you are required to write in black ink rather than blue, and that you are not allowed to use correction fluid on your reports. Remember, a member of the senior management may check your reports, so aim to make a good impression.

- **Strategies, targets and progress:** A good report will include strategies for improvement and some specific targets for the student to focus on: words such as ‘aim’, ‘ensure’, ‘develop’ and so on are useful. As well as setting targets for improvement, it is also important that
you give the parents or carers honest information on how the child is progressing.

- **The need to be positive:** Try to stress the positive in your reports. This means phrasing what you write in such a way as to encourage, rather than demotivate, the child. For instance, a negative, poorly written report (although rather over-exaggerated) might say: 'Johnny can't concentrate for longer than a few minutes and he's always ruining my lessons by chatting to his mates.' A more positive version of this, which also incorporates some targets for the student, could say: 'Although he tries hard, Johnny finds it difficult to maintain his concentration for extended periods of time. He should aim to avoid being distracted by other members of the class.'

- **Achieving a balance:** There will be occasions where you find it almost impossible to say anything positive about a student. Remember that a child who is proving this difficult to teach will be (or should be) receiving help from special needs teachers. Unless you feel very strongly about having your say, aim to be positive in the way that you phrase your report. The parents or carers, and indeed the student, will probably be used to receiving very negative comments. This may lead to even greater alienation from school. The key is to achieve a balance between honesty and subtlety.

- **Don't forget the personal:** Aim to include at least one personalized comment on each report. Writing reports is not just about giving information and targets, it is also about communicating the personal relationship you have with the child.

- **Keep it simple:** There is no need to use overly technical or complicated language; indeed you should avoid doing this if possible. The recipients of the report will come from a variety of backgrounds and they all need to understand what the teacher is saying. Avoid unnecessarily complicated vocabulary, and steer clear of slang and abbreviations.

### Shortcuts to writing reports

Try as hard as you can to hand your reports in on time. The date for reports to be sent home is usually written into the school timetable; it is very embarrassing indeed to have to admit that they are going to be late. In the primary school, it is likely that your reports will be checked by a more senior member of staff, and you will be keen to make a good
impression. In the secondary school it is unprofessional if someone has to chase you for a set of reports that should have been handed in the previous week. The names of teachers who never file their reports on time will be well known in your staffroom. Do not add your name to the list.

There are plenty of short cuts you can take when writing reports, which should not affect their quality too much. These short cuts are particularly applicable to the secondary school teacher who sees lots of different classes in one year group. If you are working at primary level, or if you teach a secondary subject where you see the students a few times a week, you should be able to give rather more individualized reports, and I would recommend that you do this. Balance your desire for parents or carers to feel that you are a caring and efficient teacher, with the need to get the reports done in a realistic amount of time. Do not beat yourself up about using the following short cuts if they prove necessary:

- **Start well in advance**: In some secondary subjects the teacher faces the prospect of writing reports on students that they hardly know. Some teachers may only see each class once a week or less, for instance with a subject like music, drama or art. This makes identifying and assessing the students a nightmare. Plan in advance for this eventuality and start preparing reports as early as you can.

- **Use ‘types’ of student**: A good short cut is to group your students into types, basically the weakest, the average and the good. You could stretch this to five categories if you wanted to include those with special problems and the really excellent students. Find three or four general statements that cover each of these categories, giving one personalized statement for each student. This approach works particularly well if your school uses computerized banks of statements.

- **Use a computer**: If you are asked to devise your own reports, access to a computer can greatly speed up the process, as you can feed each category of reports through the printer. Take your general statements, add one personal one at the beginning, and print them out. Be careful not to make any mistakes in your general statements, or you will have to reprint or correct the whole set. Be careful, also, to change the gender on each report as appropriate.

- **If you have to handwrite**: When producing handwritten reports, always use a black pen, preferably one that can be photocopied without losing definition. If you do not have access to a computer,
then ensure that your writing is on the large side and that your signature takes up as much of the page as is feasible.

- **Use tick boxes:** If your school or department does not already do this, ask whether you might use tick boxes for different subject skill areas. You could then add just one or two comments on the end of the report, rather than having to comment on the skills in full.

### Some useful phrases for reports

The phrases below should prove applicable to most age ranges and subjects, as they give generalized comments about the sorts of skills a student needs to succeed in his or her lessons, i.e. attitude, behaviour, concentration, etc. You will want to add your own subject-specific comments, for instance on factual knowledge, reading and writing skills, analytical ability, creativity and so on. I have grouped the phrases into the categories given in the previous section, which range from ‘special problems’ to ‘really excellent’ students. I have also provided some personalized comments that I might use as appropriate and a model report for each category of student. In this model report I omit any subject comments, but you would need to include these as well.

#### Students with special problems

**Approach/Attitude**
- Finds it very hard to take a positive approach to lessons.
- Needs to develop a more positive attitude towards this subject.

**Behaviour**
- Has found great difficulty in maintaining suitable behaviour in class.
- Must ensure that he/she avoids disruptive or confrontational behaviour.

**Concentration**
- It is essential that he/she develops his/her ability to concentrate for extended periods of time.
- Must aim to focus on the task in hand at all times.

**Co-operation**
- Must learn to co-operate with the other students in the class.
- Must ensure that he/she treats other students with respect.
Communication skills
◆ Needs to learn to communicate clearly and effectively.
◆ Must ensure that he/she listens carefully at all times.

Contributions to the class
◆ Must learn to contribute constructively to the class.
◆ Should always value the contributions of other students.

Homework
◆ Is having difficulty completing homework tasks on time.
◆ Must ensure that homework is completed to the best of his/her ability.

A model report
John has found it very hard to settle into this class. (Personal comment that hints at, rather than states, the fact that John is a difficult and antisocial student.) Although he does try his best, he finds it difficult to behave well. John must approach his lessons in a positive way and treat other students properly. If he is to make progress in this subject, he must learn to concentrate better. John must also complete all homework on time and to the best of his ability.

Weak students

Approach/attitude
◆ Needs to develop a more consistent approach to this subject.
◆ Should aim to take a positive attitude to his/her lessons.

Behaviour
◆ Should aim to behave in an appropriate manner at all times.
◆ Is working towards improving his/her behaviour in lessons.

Concentration
◆ Needs to learn to maintain concentration for extended periods of time.
◆ Should concentrate fully on the tasks set.

Co-operation
◆ Should be more willing to co-operate with all members of the class.
◆ Should treat other students with respect at all times.
Communication skills
◆ Should aim to make more contributions to class discussions.
◆ Needs to listen more carefully to instructions.

Contributions to the class
◆ Should aim to contribute his/her ideas on a more regular basis.
◆ Must listen carefully to the contributions of other students.

Homework
◆ Should ensure that homework is completed to the best of his/her ability.
◆ Must hand all homework in on time.

A model report
Candice takes a positive approach to this subject but her enthusiasm can result in a lack of concentration. (Personal comment that suggests that Candice is normally a good student but can lose focus at times.) She finds some aspects of this subject difficult, but is trying hard to improve. Candice should ensure that she treats other students with respect at all times. She should also make sure that she completes all homework tasks set to the best of her ability. This will help her to develop in those areas of this subject where she struggles.

Average students

Approach/attitude
◆ Usually takes a positive approach to this subject.
◆ Has a positive attitude and should aim to build on this further.

Behaviour
◆ Is generally well behaved during lessons.
◆ Is a quiet and polite student, who always behaves appropriately in class.

Concentration
◆ Is working hard to develop his/her concentration.
◆ Should aim to concentrate for increasing periods of time.

Co-operation
◆ Co-operates well with other members of the class.
◆ Is willing to work in a variety of different groups.
Communication skills
◆ Offers some ideas to the class and should now aim to be more confident.
◆ Listens well to instructions.

Contributions to the class
◆ Makes interesting contributions to class discussions.
◆ Listens well to what other students have to say.

Homework
◆ Always hands his/her homework in on time.
◆ Completes all homework tasks set to a fair standard.

A model report
Fred is usually a hard-working student who is always polite and well behaved in class. (Personal comment that suggests that Fred is a fairly good student who behaves well, but could probably do better.) He tries his best even when he finds the work difficult and he always listens well to instructions. Fred should now aim to become more confident when contributing to class discussions and to complete all homework tasks set to the best of his ability.

Good students

Approach/attitude
◆ Is a keen student who always takes a positive approach to lessons.
◆ Has an excellent attitude towards this subject.

Behaviour
◆ Is always polite and well behaved in class.
◆ Sets a good example to other students by his/her behaviour.

Concentration
◆ Can maintain a good level of concentration for extended periods.
◆ Shows good concentration when working individually.

Co-operation
◆ Works very well with all the other students in the class.
◆ Is a co-operative student who always shows respect for others.
Communication skills
◆ Always listens carefully to instructions.
◆ Offers some very interesting ideas in lessons.

Contributions to the class
◆ Is always willing to make contributions to discussion work.
◆ Makes interesting and helpful contributions to the class.

Homework
◆ Always completes homework tasks on time and to a high standard.
◆ Has produced some excellent homework assignments.

A model report
Kelly is a great asset to the class. She always approaches lessons in a positive way and shows a real talent for this subject. (Personal comment that should please both Kelly and her parents/carers. It is always encouraging for a student when a teacher suggests that they have a ‘talent’ for a subject.) She has worked hard to improve her work and is a keen participant in lessons. She should now aim to become more confident about contributing her ideas to the class. It is a pleasure to teach such a hard-working student.

Excellent students

Approach/attitude
◆ Is a keen and conscientious student who is always willing to participate.
◆ Maintains an excellent attitude in every lesson.

Behaviour
◆ Has maintained his/her excellent standard of behaviour.
◆ Sets an excellent example for other students in the way he/she behaves.

Concentration
◆ Can maintain excellent concentration for extended periods of time.
◆ Demonstrates a high level of concentration at all times.

Co-operation
◆ Is always willing to co-operate and help other students.
◆ Shows excellent leadership skills during group work.
Communication skills
◆ Communicates his/her ideas in a confident and eloquent way.
◆ Listens very carefully at all times and asks highly perceptive questions.

Contributions to the class
◆ Has made some fascinating contributions to discussion work.
◆ Is a very valuable member of the class.

Homework
◆ Is always beautifully presented with a high standard of content.
◆ Has completed some impressive homework assignments.

A model report
It is a pleasure to teach Jasdeep. He is an extremely conscientious student and he is producing work of an exceptionally high standard. (Personal comment that suggests just how good Jasdeep is at this subject and also praises his approach.) He sets an excellent example for other students in the way he behaves and he is always willing to co-operate with and help the other members of the class. His homework is always beautifully presented with an excellent standard of content. He should aim to continue working as he has been doing so far. Well done, Jasdeep!

Some personalized comments
◆ Is always polite and hard working in class.
◆ Is a lively student with a very positive attitude.
◆ Is a very valuable member of the class.
◆ Shows a real talent for this subject.
◆ Is keen, conscientious and always willing to help.
◆ Has a very mature attitude.
◆ Is a real pleasure to teach.
◆ Is a talented student who should aim to fulfil his/her potential.
IV It’s All About People
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Teaching is, of course, all about working with the students (whether they are toddlers, children, young people, teenagers or adults). In this chapter, you’ll find lots of advice and information about dealing with different children and young people. There is information here about developing good relationships with your students, ideas for helping those with special needs, case studies based on a range of different types of student and many other helpful hints and strategies.

You and your students

Being a teacher is all about creating, developing and sustaining relationships with the children and young people with whom we work. If we can create a positive and respectful relationship with each and every child, we should encourage all our students to achieve their best. Here are some initial thoughts about the relationship between you and your children:

- **It takes time:** Although it would be wonderful if our children instantly bonded with us and respected us, in reality it can take a great deal of time before a strong relationship is achieved. This is perhaps especially so for the secondary school teacher with a large number of different classes and students. Don’t expect miracles – it could be a year or more before some of your children come around to you.

- **Fear versus respect:** In a class where the children fear the teacher, there might be good behaviour, but there is little chance of a real and reciprocal relationship. In a class where the children respect the teacher, and vice versa, there should be a strong relationship, good behaviour and effective teaching and learning. The secret is learning how to create that respect in the first place.
A two-way street: You might do all that you possibly can for your children, and still find it impossible to break through the barriers that they erect to keep adults out. Although creating good relationships is a two-way street, you might have to persist with your positive efforts for a long time before some students let you in.

You might not like them all: We don’t necessarily like every person with whom we come into contact. It’s not often said, but you will sometimes have to work with a child that you don’t particularly like. This is especially tricky in the primary classroom, because you are stuck with the same class for a whole year. Try not to feel guilty about negative emotions towards a particular student — you are simply being human. Be professional though: ensure that your emotions are not apparent in the way that you treat your children, and offer every individual a fair and equal chance.

Dealing with the poorly behaved: The majority of your students should hopefully be well adjusted and keen to work. Most teachers do have to work with children who have behavioural problems, sometimes very severe ones. Deal with these individuals in the best way that you possibly can, and try to ensure that they have full access to a good education. At the same time, try not to let their behaviour jeopardize the education of the other students in your class. This is often very hard to achieve, but do persist.

Special educational needs: When you collect your class list or lists, you should hopefully receive information about any students who have special educational needs. Find out, preferably before you start teaching, just what the needs are of the students in your class.

Don’t prejudge your children: Avoid having preconceptions about your children based on what other teachers might say about them, or on the information you receive about them. Some children will display behavioural problems in some classes or subjects, or for certain teachers, but may behave themselves perfectly well for you. If you face the class having already made a decision that child x will be poorly behaved, your expectations may create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Personality plays a part: Although it’s rarely spoken about, it seems obvious that your personality will be a factor in the way that your children relate to you. If you are likeable, pleasant and show that you like them, this will help you build up a good bond. If you are moody, unpleasant and appear to hate them, this is not a good sign. You might not be able to totally change your personality, but
be aware of the part that it plays in the relationships you form with a class.

**Grouping the students**

Different schools and subject areas use a variety of different methods for grouping their students, based on their intake and also on their educational philosophy. In primary schools the children will normally be grouped by age, although sometimes (for instance in small schools with very few children) vertical groups are used so that children of different ages work together. In the primary school, small groups of children might be pulled out of their normal classes to work in ability sets for certain subjects, or perhaps be streamed for literacy and numeracy work.

In the secondary school, the tutor or registration groups in each year will usually contain students of mixed abilities. These mixed groups may then be put into different sets for some or all of their academic studies, perhaps starting from Year 7, or perhaps only higher up the school. In the past some schools would ‘stream’ their students, creating two different ability groups within a year, perhaps designated the ‘A’ and ‘B’ streams. This practice has become less common in recent years.

It is usually the senior members of staff who decide whether to set the students: they may decide to create top, middle and bottom sets; they may use only mixed-ability groups; or they could decide on a combination of both methods.

There is much discussion about whether students are better served by setting, streaming or by mixed-ability teaching. You will come to your own conclusions about this, but in reality you will have little influence on the creation of groups until you gain promotion. The following comments are based on my own experience of teaching different groupings of students. They cover the advantages and disadvantages of these for the teacher, rather than from a philosophical perspective.

**Teaching top sets and high-ability students**

- **Advantages:** It is very enjoyable to teach a group of highly motivated and intelligent children. They stretch you intellectually and there are usually fewer discipline problems. You will move quickly through the work and you can try out some more creative strategies. There is usually little need to differentiate the work you set.
Disadvantages: Your marking load will be heavy, as these students are likely to work at a fast pace. You will need to be on top of the subject in order to field any awkward questions. You may also encounter ambitious parents who question the quality or quantity of your teaching. Students in top sets (or with high ability levels) can sometimes become arrogant or lazy because they feel that they ‘know it all’ already. It can be difficult to know how best to discipline them for this behaviour.

Teaching mixed ability groups

Advantages: There is a good mix of characters in a mixed-ability group, and the stronger children may encourage the weaker ones to achieve better results. The children are generally fairly well motivated, but you will not have quite the marking load that you would have with a top set.

Disadvantages: If there are disaffected children in a mixed-ability group, they can affect the quality of the lesson for the more able or well-motivated students. This can cause tensions within the class between those who want to learn and those who do not. You will have to differentiate the work you set if there is a wide range of abilities in the class.

Teaching bottom sets and lower-ability students

Advantages: If you teach a bottom set, or a group of weak students, your marking load is fairly small and you can keep well ahead of the children in your planning. Often bottom sets are deliberately designed to contain a smaller number of students. You can use highly structured lessons and even try out some more unusual strategies that could appeal to these children. You may have support teachers or assistants to help you.

Disadvantages: If the children have behavioural problems, you might experience some more serious confrontations, especially if they are not willing to work hard and you are pushing them to do so. With this type of group you are not intellectually stretched by the lessons you are teaching. You may find this type of group very tiring to work with. There can be a tendency to place children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in these sets as a matter of course. For those children with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have high academic ability this can lead to frustrations and consequently to a worsening of behaviour.
Special educational needs

The special needs teachers at your school will have a great deal of expertise in this complex area, and you should always refer to them for detailed information about the types of special needs your students have, and how you can deal with them. In this section you will find some details about the more common types of special educational need, as well as some tips on how you can best access the information you need about your children, and deal with their behavioural problems.

**Types of special educational need**

There is a huge range of different types of special need, with new conditions being recognized or named all the time. The more common types of special educational needs that you are likely to come across are as follows:

- **Emotional, social and behavioural difficulties**: This is usually abbreviated to EBD or ESBD and the term covers a wide range of problems. Students with these types of difficulties may exhibit confrontational behaviour, but equally they can be withdrawn or 'school refusers', i.e. those children who will not attend school. It is not always the case that students who do not behave themselves in your lessons actually have behavioural difficulties. Ask yourself honestly just how deep a child's problems go before you refer him or her to the special needs staff.

- **Specific learning difficulties**: Again, this term is often abbreviated and students are described as having an SpLD. This term also covers a wide range of problems, but the problem is only obvious in one particular area of the curriculum. An example of this would be a problem with spelling. If you see that one of your students is struggling in one aspect, but is otherwise very strong academically, they might have a specific learning difficulty.

- **Dyslexia**: This term has become very popular, with parents as well as with teachers. It is often used (wrongly) to cover a multitude of problems with spelling, writing and so on. Do not throw this term around, using it to describe every student who ever makes a spelling mistake. If you are interested in finding out more about the subject, there is lots of information available, and new strategies for helping children with dyslexia are being developed all the time. A good starting point for reading up on the subject is the website www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk. Simply put, the term
describes a problem with recognizing words, which can range from mild to very severe.

- **English as a second language/English as an additional language:** These two terms, abbreviated to ESL and EAL, describe those students who are not fully proficient in English. They might speak another language at home and this could cause them difficulties in their lessons. A student whose first language is not English might have problems with grammatical constructions and also with technical terminology.

**Accessing records**

It is worth getting to know the people involved with SEN in your school as soon as possible. They can advise you on dealing with students who have difficulties and will also fill you in on background information to help you understand the causes of poor behaviour in your classes. They can tell you about the specific learning needs that certain children have and how you can match your lesson content and delivery to these needs.

Ask for information about the special needs of the students you will be teaching at the first possible opportunity. At the beginning of term all teachers are very busy and no one will give you this information unless you make a specific request. Bear in mind that some aspects of a child’s records may be confidential, but you should still be able to gain a general idea of what is going on. Again, though, I would stress that you should not prejudge your students on this material, merely use it to inform your teaching and learning approaches.

**Dealing with behavioural problems**

It is sometimes the case that the child with a special educational need might become frustrated in the classroom, and consequently cause difficulties for the teacher. Alternatively, the child’s special need might involve an issue with behaviour. If you teach a child with serious behaviour problems, look carefully at the ideas given in Chapter 3 about setting boundaries. The case studies in the following section give detailed information on the options available, and the outcomes that you might expect. Here are a few brief tips for dealing with some of the more common behavioural problems:

- **Isolate the troublemaker:** Every troublemaker wants an audience: after all, a lot of misbehaviour is about seeking attention. Isolate
the child by taking them aside and talking quietly to them rather than getting into a confrontation in front of the whole class.

- Get down to their level: It is much easier to reason with someone if you are literally on the same level as them. If the student is seated, crouch down beside the child to chat. This immediately makes you seem more reasonable and lessens the authoritarian style of some teachers that can cause confrontations.

- Remain reasonable at all times: It is hard to be angry with someone who refuses to rise to the bait. Remain calm and this should have a direct impact on a rude or confrontational student. Perhaps at home the only way for such children to get a reaction from their parents or guardians is to become confrontational. Perhaps most of the adult role models they see use an aggressive approach when they encounter problems. If you refuse to shout or get angry, you should be able to defuse the situation and help the student learn to trust you.

- Keep your voice quiet: Learn to keep your voice low and quiet: this will help calm the situation down and force the child to slow down and consider the behaviour in a clearer way. Put yourself in the child’s shoes and think about the difference between someone shouting back at you and staying calm. This tip will also stop you from becoming a loud teacher and wearing out your voice.

- Explain the problem: Often a child simply will not understand why what they are doing is wrong. Explain why the behaviour is inappropriate, and ask the child if he or she agrees with you and understands what you are saying. This gives the student a chance to address and change antisocial or inappropriate behaviour.

- Stick to your guns: Back to those boundaries again! You are the teacher, you have set the rules and been fair and clear about it. Do not give in to pacify a child. If you do, you are storing up trouble for yourself in the future.

- State the sanction clearly: Staying calm and reasonable, inform the child of what will happen if the misbehaviour continues. If the student (and the class) see you sticking to your boundaries, they will know the outcome of any misbehaviour.

- Depersonalize the sanction: Instead of making the child feel that he or she is receiving a personal reprimand, try to depersonalize the punishment you are going to give by saying: 'If you continue to [state misbehaviour] I will have no option but to [state sanction].’ This helps to make you seem reasonable and fair.
Case studies

The following case studies are fictitious and reflect a variety of the situations you may have to face. The case studies give details about the student, what the problem is and offer some ideas about how the teacher could deal with it. These are only examples, and much of how you deal with real-life problems depends on the situation you find yourself in, the type of class you have and the child's reactions to what you do and say. These case studies should provide a useful starting point from which to work during your NQT year.

The 'odd-one-out'

The student

Joe is rather a strange child. He lacks social skills and does not integrate well with the rest of the class. If you are honest, you can understand why they do not want to work with him. His behaviour is strange and he can become quite confrontational if the other children do not accept his ideas.

At the start of term, the students were willing to work with Joe, but as time goes on they are becoming increasingly frustrated by him and keep asking you not to make them work with him. You are becoming worried about what might happen if someone refuses point blank to cooperate.

Dealing with the problem

1. The first step is to find out, if you have not done so already, whether Joe is on the SEN list. If he is, you should ask for some more information about exactly what his problem is and what has caused it. If he is not officially recognized as having special needs, bring his problems to the attention of the appropriate person. He clearly has some sort of difficulty with socialization, and this needs to be addressed.

2. It might be worth taking Joe to one side, perhaps after your lesson, and discussing with him why he has trouble relating to the other children. You will need to be subtle about this, perhaps asking him if he feels he is settling in okay and if not, why not. You could also offer him some strategies to help him get on better with the other students, for instance listening carefully to other people's ideas.

3. At the start of the term you should have set the boundaries and all the students must follow them. If any children refuse to work with Joe, simply state to them that they must respect the others in the
class by working in the groupings you have organized. Follow the appropriate sanctions if anyone refuses.

4. Another option is to 'fix' the groups to avoid any potentially tricky combinations. This avoids the possibility of confrontation, although you are not really addressing the root of the problem.

5. If appropriate, you could do some work on the topic of 'making friends' with the class, in the hope that Joe will pick up some tips.

The potentially violent student

The student
Thelma is well known around the school for her violent temper, which flares up out of the blue. She is usually a fairly well-motivated student and she has produced some good work for you. However, she does have a tendency to argue with a couple of the other children in your class.

At the moment these arguments are only verbal, but they are getting increasingly vicious. You worry that they might escalate into physical violence. You can sense a lot of tension building up in the class.

Dealing with the problem

1. The first step is to check whether the SEN staff have identified any behavioural difficulties in Thelma. Ask for their advice on how you should deal with her, as they may know about specific events or actions that make her temper flare up.

2. Talk to Thelma individually about her behaviour and try to help her work out what it is that makes her angry and how she might deal with it in an appropriate way. This may prove difficult if she also gets confrontational with you. Try to explain to her how other students and teachers perceive her behaviour, rather than making her feel that it is about her as a person.

3. Encourage Thelma to learn some relaxation and anger management techniques, for instance counting down from ten when she feels herself getting upset.

4. Move Thelma to sit away from any children who might be pulled into arguing with her. If possible, sit her on her own at a desk near the front of the room. If she becomes confrontational when asked to do this, explain that you are trying to help her control her temper.

5. When Thelma does get into confrontations, try to defuse the
situation by talking to her quietly, moving her away from the person she is quarrelling with, or by asking her to step outside to calm down (perhaps with a friend). If a violent confrontation seems likely to take place, aim to remove Thelma from the classroom as quickly as possible. You might want to offer Thelma the option of going to sit in a quiet and private area as soon as she feels herself about to blow.

The student with poor concentration

The student
Fred generally behaves well in class, but he has a problem finishing work. His confidence in his work is very low and he rarely concentrates long enough to complete anything. He complains of tiredness if you ask him to write for more than a few minutes at a time.

Fred’s work is often very difficult to read and he has now started to distract other students nearby, chatting to them when he runs out of steam. He very rarely completes his homework.

Dealing with the problem
1. Again, talk to the SEN department. It may be that Fred has a genuine problem with concentration because of a specific learning difficulty. This might also explain the poor presentation of his work – perhaps he is hiding the fact that he cannot spell or perhaps he does not understand the work you are doing.
2. Give Fred small but achievable targets for his written work. You might draw a line halfway down the page and ask him to write to that point; you could set him a target of a certain number of words.
3. Talk to him about why it is important for him to work neatly and complete the tasks set. Ask him if there is a problem that you can help him with.
4. At the same time, stick to the boundaries you have set for the class – sanction him for uncompleted homework and for chatting in lessons. Hopefully this will encourage him to concentrate.
5. It might be worth phoning Fred’s parents or carers to talk to them about his homework. This can often help a great deal by identifying that this is a problem and showing the child that you care. They might be willing to spend time with him at home to help him complete his work.
6. Fred may find it helpful to work on a computer, as it is possibly the act of writing that is tiring him. If your school has a portable, you
could let him use it, perhaps as a reward for sustained focus in lessons. You might also allow Fred to record some of his written work, rather than writing it.

**The arrogant student**

**The student**
Sandra is a very self-confident student, but her confidence can come across as arrogance. She completes all the work you set to a high standard, but she has started taking liberties with her behaviour, interrupting while you are addressing the class.

Sandra has started arriving late for class. When you ask her where she has been, she always has some sort of excuse, but never has a note to prove it. You believe she is lying to you. Whenever you try to challenge her about her behaviour, she says your lessons are boring and she doesn’t enjoy them. She frequently says (loudly) that Mr Evans, the teacher they had last year, was much better than you. She also asks you repeatedly if you are a new teacher and others in the class are picking up on this.

**Dealing with the problem**
These types of students can be surprisingly hard to deal with, as they can really disrupt a class without actually earning many sanctions. They can also severely undermine your self-confidence, especially if you are an inexperienced teacher.

1. Stick rigidly to your boundaries and if Sandra does overstep the mark, apply the appropriate sanction. For instance, explain to her that being late without a note means that she will receive a punishment. You will impose this on her just as you would on any other member of the class. Make sure that you are fair and that she receives the same treatment as everyone else. That way, she cannot complain.

2. It is very tempting, when a student says your lessons are boring, to respond to the accusation. You may not feel particularly confident about what you are teaching and this type of comment can be very hurtful. Fight against the temptation to throw a jibe back at Sandra: this is exactly what she wants. Either make no response at all, or take the opposite tack, and say: ‘I know, isn’t it terrible? I’ve tried everything I can think of but still I can only dream up these really boring lessons.’ Do this with no hint of sarcasm in your voice.
3. It might be worth talking to her about her behaviour and explaining why you feel it is unacceptable. Be aware that in doing this you are acknowledging that she is getting to you, and she might just step up her campaign. You could ask a more senior or experienced teacher to have a word with her, but again you run the risk of undermining your authority.

4. Overall, the best response is to completely blank her anytime she says or does anything designed to attract your attention. If you get into a slanging match, she has won.

The unhappy or shy student

The student
Selina is a quiet, well-behaved child. She rarely puts her hand up in class, but she always completes her work quickly and neatly. In fact, the other students call her a 'boffin'. You have also heard them laughing at her glasses.

She doesn't seem to have any friends in your class and you often see her wandering alone around the school at break and lunchtime. Recently she has become even more withdrawn in lessons.

Dealing with the problem
1. It seems possible, from the information here, that Selina is being bullied. In the secondary school, the first approach should be to talk to Selina's form tutor to see whether this is a possibility. In the primary school, keep an eye out to see whether there are low level incidents of bullying taking place in your classroom. You might also ask a playtime supervisor whether any bullying has been going on.

2. If you have built a strong relationship with Selina, then you could ask her what is wrong. Perhaps she came from a different school or area to all the other children and does not know anybody? You could mention that you have noticed that she is very quiet in class and ask her whether she wants to talk to you about anything.

3. Try every way you can to improve Selina's self-confidence. Praise her work, preferably in written comments rather than in front of the class, to avoid the others developing this idea of her as a 'boffin'. Encourage her to become more of a participant in class discussions, but don't force her to answer questions in front of her peers.

4. Consider contacting Selina's parents or guardians, after consulting
the appropriate pastoral manager. They might not realize that Selina is finding school so hard.

5. Try to encourage the other children, perhaps ones you know are sensitive, to see if they can include her in break and lunchtime activities. You could also suggest that Selina joins a homework club or other activity that takes place during breaks. This means she will have somewhere to go and also gives her the opportunity to make friends.

6. In the secondary school, ask her form tutor whether she has any friends in her form group. If she does, it could be worth putting her in the same class as these students for your subject, even if this means moving her to a different class.

**The verbally aggressive student**

*The student*

Colin is an extremely difficult student with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. He claims that you pick on him and whenever you try to tell him off or ask him to complete work he reacts badly, throwing abuse at you. The standard of his written work is very poor and he rarely finishes anything.

Colin is also confrontational with the other children and none of them want to work with him. Your class has quite a few difficult children in it and you feel that Colin is dragging them all down with him.

*Dealing with the problem*

1. Try to find out the background to Colin’s problems so that you can avoid exacerbating the situation: perhaps it is something specific that sets him off. Ask special needs staff for advice on how to deal with him and check whether there is a chance of some extra support in your classroom.

2. Be as fair and firm as you can, sticking closely to the boundaries you have set and explaining why his behaviour warrants the sanctions you give. Make it clear that, rather than the sanction being your choice, it is his choice because of the way he is behaving.

3. At times you may need to flex your boundaries a little with Colin, depending on how severe the problem is. This might mean overlooking minor infringements for the first bit of the lesson, until he is settled and calm. You do not want to have to send a student
out of every lesson; on the other hand the children must see that you stick to the expectations you have outlined.

4. Use praise as much as you can: whenever you see Colin doing something positive, commend him for it. It is easy for the teacher to slip into negative responses with very challenging children. Bear in mind that this child has severe problems – he must have had a very difficult life to end up behaving like this. Do not take what he says or does personally.

5. Try to get Colin working with some very good students, who will not respond to any disruptive behaviour and who will hopefully motivate him. Use careful praise of these children to encourage Colin to emulate them. Offer some really good rewards to the whole class and try to ensure that Colin wins one of them.

6. It could be worth telephoning or meeting with his parents or carers (preferably before the parents’ evening, if it is not early on in the year). Check first with the special needs staff to ensure that this is not going to exacerbate any problems. A chat with his parents could give you an insight into why he behaves as he does, but be careful to frame what you say in a positive light.
Teaching attracts a diverse range of people, some of whom started on their careers many years ago and have years of experience, others who are young teachers or NQTs just starting out in the profession. A large secondary school may have as many as 100 teachers working in the different departments. There might also be a number of other staff: from catering to cleaning workers, from science technicians to office staff. Even in a small primary school there will be a range of teaching and non-teaching staff working together as part of the team responsible for running the school and looking after the children.

In some schools, the members of the team work well together and there are very few tensions. In other schools, staffroom politics and personal rivalries create a difficult atmosphere. In this chapter you can find lots of tips about working with the other members of staff at your school. You’ll find suggestions about who it is useful to get to know, as well as some light-hearted thoughts about different ‘types’ of teachers. You’ll also find plenty of ideas about working with support staff, and coping with the foibles of senior management.

**Getting to know the right people**

School staff are, on the whole, brilliant at supporting and helping each other. Make it a priority, early on in your induction year, to get to know the best and most helpful people. Wear a smile and try always to have a chat with members of staff as you pass around the school (no matter how stressed you are feeling). Getting to know the right people has many advantages:

- it’s a key part of you becoming a member of the school team;
- these people can help and support you;
- in return, you can be helpful and supportive to them;
- it’s part of your professional role;
Getting on with other staff in your job will make your working life much easier and happier.

The kind of people you should get to know include:

- **Experienced teachers**: In larger schools you often find a layer of experienced teachers who have not taken promotion to a senior level, preferring instead to stay in the classroom. Sometimes these teachers are working as ASTs; sometimes they are simply keeping their heads low and getting on with the job. Find someone you feel you could talk to if you have a query about something that is worrying you, but that you might not want to talk about with your mentor.

- **Your induction tutor**: You should get to know your induction tutor right from the start of term. The type of relationship you develop will depend on who has been appointed in this role. If your tutor is a senior member of staff, he or she is likely to be busy and you may have to chase for time to meet up and talk. If you’re lucky, you will find that you develop a really strong bond with your mentor. If you’re unlucky, you might have to bite your lip in order to build some kind of working relationship.

- **The union reps**: Get to know the union representatives in your school and think about which union (if any) you would like to join. These reps can answer a variety of questions you may have. If you are ever called in to meet with senior management because of some kind of problem, a union rep can act as your mediator or adviser, ensuring that you are treated fairly.

- **Heads of department**: In the secondary school, it is useful to be on friendly terms with the heads of the various departments. If you want to do any cross-curricular work, these teachers will be a great starting point for your planning.

- **Curriculum co-ordinators**: Similarly, in the primary school there will be curriculum co-ordinators who oversee the different areas of the curriculum. These teachers will typically be subject specialists in their particular area, and will have a good bank of knowledge, ideas and teaching materials. Get to know them and ask for advice about teaching these subjects to your class.

- **Support staff**: These days, many teachers have a whole team of support staff coming into their classrooms. Build a good relationship with your TA or LSA, and you can work together to help your children succeed.
Office staff: Teachers sometimes overlook the office staff in a school, perhaps because they do not normally have much contact with them. This is a shame. Office staff can make your life a lot easier, for instance if you have a letter that needs typing, or if you need information about a student — a telephone number, for instance. Take the time to get to know the office staff: they perform a very valuable role in the running of the school and will generally be very happy to help you. If the headteacher has a secretary, aim to get to know him or her as well. If you need fast access to the head or approval for something, for instance a trip, an amenable head’s secretary can smooth your path.

Buildings staff: Another important group of people involved in the running of the school are the buildings or caretaking staff. Again, the part that these staff play is often overlooked by teachers. There might be a buildings manager, a caretaker, some cleaners and so on. Make a point of chatting to buildings staff when you see them. If you need to book the hall or have some chairs moved at short notice, a good relationship with the caretaker will smooth your way. Cleaners are poorly paid, and their job is not easy, so consider how you might help them with the task. For instance, you could ask your classes to put the chairs on the tables at the end of the day. Take time to ensure that your classroom floor is clear of rubbish at the end of each day, enlisting the help of your pupils to do this job.

Caterers and lunchtime supervisors: In larger schools, there will be a whole team of people working behind the scenes to ensure that the students are fed and supervised at lunchtimes. These people perform a vital job, and again it is well worth getting friendly with them. You might even get a few more chips on your plate!

Volunteers: In many primary schools, a team of volunteers works alongside the salaried members of staff. These are typically parents, but they might also be interested members of the local community. Always remember that these people are giving up their own free time to support the school. Be positive, friendly and interested in the contribution that they make.

Special educational needs staff: Finally, get to know the staff involved with special educational needs in your school. If you show an interest, they will have lots of valuable advice that they can give you about handling your more difficult students. They might also be able to offer you specialized resources for your classes. You will also find it easier to get information about students if you are on
speaking terms with special needs staff. Again, their role is a crucial one in the smooth running of the school, and one that is perhaps underestimated at times.

Getting to know the wrong people

Unfortunately, there are also a few people in schools whom you should avoid like the plague. These are the people who have stayed in teaching because they cannot (or cannot be bothered to) get another job. To them, teaching is not a vocation but an irritation. They will moan at every opportunity and to anyone who will listen about how dreadful the students are. Teaching is, of course, a tough job, and I would never try to deny that. However, the only way to give the students a fair deal and to enjoy it is to work hard at it. Try to avoid those teachers whose cynicism and jaded attitudes might wear you down.

Types of teachers

Here are some examples of the types of teachers you might encounter and details about the way they might behave. These examples are entirely fictitious; I have made them rather stereotypical and, hopefully, amusing. Teachers are individuals and use a mixture of styles in the classroom, depending as much on the class as on their personality. However, you might like to see if you can recognize any of these teachers in your own school or even if you recognize any of the qualities listed in yourself.

The 'old-school-tie' teacher

- **Dress code:** Always dresses smartly and, if male, wears a suit and tie; this teacher believes school uniform is vital for maintaining discipline among the children.
- **Favourite catchphrases:** Sentences starting with 'In my day...', for instance 'In my day children knew how to behave themselves.' The question 'Would you do that at home?' is used for various misdemeanours. 'You boy/girl!' is shouted to gain a child's attention.
- **Discipline code:** A strict disciplinarian who believes that children or pupils (never students) should be seen and not heard.
- **Favourite method of discipline:** Would like to use the cane, but since
this is forbidden, gives the children a verbal thrashing instead. Keen on giving out vast quantities of lines and lots of detentions. Likes to send children to stand outside the classroom, where they are immediately forgotten until an inspector or headteacher arrives.

- **Teaching style:** A strong focus on traditional methods and working in silence. No exploratory, creative or group work.
- **Marking strategy:** A red pen is used to put lots of crosses, a few ticks, and a mark out of ten on each piece of work.
- **Bad habits:** A tendency to turn red and spit when angry, which is frequently. The male of the species has a poor taste in ties. Likes moaning out loud in the staffroom to anyone who will listen.
- **Classroom layout:** Desks in rows, facing the teacher.
- **State of teacher's desk:** Very neat, with only one pile of marking to be done and lots of red pens to use when doing it. Do not, whatever you do, borrow a pen or move any of this teacher's papers.
- **Advantages:** Children know where they stand with this type of teacher. They will be well disciplined, although through fear rather than respect. Usually achieves good results with able, well-motivated children.
- **Disadvantages:** Quiet children are often too scared to answer questions and there is little group work. Weaker children may exhibit bad behaviour as an excuse to escape from the classroom. Difficult students may become confrontational.

- **Marks /10**
  - Educational value = 6
  - Development of creativity and imagination = 1
  - Quality of discipline = 7
  - Equality of opportunity = 1
  - Scale of student appreciation = 2
- **Total score /50** 17

**'The students are my mates' teacher**

- **Dress code:** Dresses in a casual style, often wearing trendy labels. Tries to dress like the students to get 'in' with them. Not keen on school uniform; tends to overlook minor infringements of the uniform rules.
- **Favourite catchphrases:** Aims to emulate the students. 'Check it out' is a favourite. If a fight starts between students, uses 'C'mon, let's be reasonable about this, guys.'
- **Discipline code:** Bases the discipline code on the theory that, if you
let the students do what they want, they are likely to work harder. Feels comfortable with lots of noise and activity.

- **Favourite method of discipline:** Believes that: ‘The students will discipline themselves if they feel sufficiently motivated and any misdemeanours are an expression of the students’ frustration at an outmoded schooling system, which denies young people a sense of identity and seeks to destroy their natural creativity.’

- **Teaching style:** Lots of exploration and issues-based work, usually in groups. Avoids traditional methods such as ‘chalk and talk’.

- **Marking strategy:** Only gives positive comments and feels that using red ink demotivates the students. Strongly against the concept of a right or wrong answer, even in fact-based subjects.

- **Bad habits:** Talking while the class are chatting; using too much jargon when talking to other teachers; drinking alcohol and smoking (sometimes with the students).

- **Classroom layout:** Desks usually set out in groups, but sometimes likes to get rid of the furniture altogether and have an impromptu ‘drama session’. Generally much movement of desks, often in your classroom; unlikely to return the furniture to its original position.

- **State of teacher’s desk:** Neat desk, but only because all the papers are in one pile. At the bottom of the pile is that really urgent form that should have been filled in three weeks ago.

- **Advantages:** Students like this type of teacher, partly because they feel relaxed, but also because they can get away with murder. Teaching style encourages creativity and individuality.

- **Disadvantages:** Chaos probably reigns. Noisy classroom so troubling for students who prefer to concentrate on their work.

- **Marks /10**
  
  Educational value = 7
  Development of creativity and imagination = 9
  Quality of discipline = 3
  Equality of opportunity = 7
  Scale of student appreciation = 7

- **Total score /50** 33

The ultra-efficient teacher

- **Dress code:** Always dresses smartly: if male wears a suit and tie, if female wears a smart jacket with a skirt. Feels that school uniform is important and will impose the school rules on a fair and consistent basis.

- **Favourite catchphrase:** ‘I’d like you all to face the front, make eye contact and listen carefully.’
◆ **Discipline code:** Has a strong sense of discipline, but is not necessarily seen as strict by the children. Believes that everyone has an equal right to a good education and will impose the discipline necessary to achieve this.

◆ **Favourite method of discipline:** Applies the school behaviour policy to the letter. Will contact the home if a child is consistently misbehaving.

◆ **Teaching style:** Clear and well-organized lessons with a good balance between teacher and student input.

◆ **Marking strategy:** Combines written comments with close marking of errors. Willing to spend hours on this task.

◆ **Bad habits:** A refusal to see the worst in any child. A tendency to cosy up to senior management because of an ambition to get quick promotion. Reports are always beautifully presented and handed in before the deadline.

◆ **Classroom layout:** Desks usually set out in rows, facing the teacher, but will be moved for group work and returned immaculately to the previous position.

◆ **State of teacher's desk:** Spotless, with lesson plans for each day carefully laid out in advance. Photocopied resources for the next three weeks are ready for use.

◆ **Advantages:** Children know where they stand and respond well to the consistent standards. Work is neatly presented and children are given equality of opportunity.

◆ **Disadvantages:** Irritating and depressing to mere mortals, as we know we will never be this efficient.

◆ **Marks /10**

  * Educational value = 9
  * Development of creativity and imagination = 7
  * Quality of discipline = 9
  * Equality of opportunity = 9
  * Scale of student appreciation = 7

◆ **Total score /50** 41

### The joker

◆ **Dress code:** Wears fairly casual, 'fun' clothes, brightly coloured ties and t-shirts with amusing captions. Couldn't care less about school uniform.

◆ **Favourite catchphrases:** Starts every lesson by saying: 'Do you want to hear a joke?' The joke will invariably be rude.

◆ **Discipline code:** Feels that if the students find the lessons funny, they will behave themselves. Surprisingly, this often works.
Favourite method of discipline: Disciplines classes by making fun of any student who misbehaves. Joke punishments include the child standing in the corner, on one leg, with hands on head.

Teaching style: Uses personal anecdotes to illustrate a subject. For instance, geography work on polluted rivers may consist of a story about the time the joker and his or her mates got drunk and threw a shopping trolley into the local river. Lots of lesson time spent with the students listening to the teacher telling jokes. Likes to jump up on desks to add variety.

Marking strategy: Students' books full of jokey comments — the joker is happy for the students to respond to these in a similar vein.

Bad habits: See 'favourite catchphrases' (telling bad jokes) and 'dress code' (wearing bad ties). Tends to favour strange haircuts.

Classroom layout: Desks set out in rows, facing the teacher. This is not because of any particular educational philosophy, but so that all the students can hear the jokes and admire the accompanying demonstrations.

State of teacher's desk: Not renowned for tidiness. Has a drawer full of handy practical jokes to play on teachers and students.

Advantages: Students respond well — a lot of school can be boring, so it's good for them to have a laugh. They often have a surprising amount of respect for the joker.

Disadvantages: Not a lot of teaching goes on because so much time is spent telling jokes. The quiet students sit quietly while the louder ones join in and get most of the attention.

Marks /10

- Educational value = 6
- Development of creativity and imagination = 9
- Quality of discipline = 7
- Equality of opportunity = 6
- Scale of student appreciation = 9

Total score /50 37

The chaos theory teacher

Dress code: Looks as if the outfit was thrown together in a force ten hurricane in about ten seconds that morning. Hair appears slept on and has not seen a comb in recent history.

Favourite catchphrases: Usually spotted wandering around the staffroom asking, 'Has anybody got a red pen I can borrow?' As exam time draws near, this will change to: 'I'm sure I had that set of really important GCSE exam papers a minute ago ... now where did I put them?'
**Discipline code:** What discipline code? Chaos rules and the children must sink or swim. A number of students sitting at the back of the room on the floor smoking cigarettes.

**Favourite method of discipline:** Believes that having a chat to the offenders to try and discover what makes them tick will work miracles.

**Teaching style:** Practises 'discovery learning' — translates as 'the kids do what they like and if I'm lucky a little bit of learning takes place'. May be highly intelligent but has trouble putting information across.

**Marking strategy:** Straightforward and works every time: lose the books before you have to mark them.

**Bad habits:** Absent-mindedly picking nose or scratching bottom. For other bad habits see also 'marking strategy' (losing books) and 'dress code' (incredibly messy).

**Classroom layout:** Desks set out in rows, to impose a little bit of order on the class. By the end of the day/lesson rows are disbanded altogether (by the students, rather than by the teacher) and desks positioned so that friends can sit together.

**State of teacher's desk:** Looks like the proverbial bomb has hit it. This is probably one of the main reasons for the marking strategy: somewhere beneath the debris are those vital exam papers and lost exercise books.

**Advantages:** Usually a real expert on many subjects and students respond well to this. Teaching style can lead to some very creative thinking.

**Disadvantages:** Bright kids may do well, but less able tend to get lost in the whirlwind.

**Marks /10**

- Educational value = 6
- Development of creativity and imagination = 8
- Quality of discipline = 2
- Equality of opportunity = 4
- Scale of student appreciation = 7

**Total score /50**  27

The earth mother or father

**Dress code:** If female, wears a long pinafore dress, sometimes made of corduroy, and flat shoes with hair tied back in a bun. If male, spotted by the 'Jesus' sandals (worn, in impeccable style, with socks) and the long beard.

**Favourite catchphrases:** Now then, children, let's all settle down and do
some work, shall we?’ said as the class start to riot. Students are called ‘children’ up to school-leaving age.

- **Discipline code:** Tries to encourage self-discipline in the children; feels it is wrong for teachers to be disciplinarian. Asks quietly for silence and is noisily ignored.
- **Favourite method of discipline:** Believes in talking to the children about why they did what they did and why they shouldn’t do it again.
- **Teaching style:** Soft and gently spoken. Lessons consist of talking to the class for a while then asking them to explore a topic. Rarely raises voice, except when panic sets in as the class is rioting and the head is coming down the corridor.
- **Marking strategy:** Only positive comments, no red pen or crosses allowed.
- **Bad habits:** Talking while the children are talking; not washing hair frequently enough; wearing socks with sandals.
- **Classroom layout:** Desks grouped, so that the children can ‘share their ideas’. Lots of environmentally friendly posters on the walls.
- **State of teacher’s desk:** Neat desk, with lots of little personal items, such as a cuddly toy, a photo of the family and so on.
- **Advantages:** Beneficial for quiet and weak children, as they receive lots of personal attention and a gentle, caring approach.
- **Disadvantages:** Poor classroom control; lessons do not stretch the more able; those with behavioural difficulties may take advantage.

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<tr>
<th>Marks /10</th>
<th>Educational value = 6</th>
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<td>Scale of student appreciation = 7</td>
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**Total score /50** 33

### Working with support staff

Many teachers now have support staff working alongside them in the classroom. The help and expertise that they offer can be a very valuable asset in your NQT year and beyond. You might work with classroom assistants, special needs workers, learning support assistants and so on. The following advice should help you get the best out of your team:
Early on in the school year, sit down with any support staff you have and start to build a good working relationship.

In essence, you are in charge, but it is best to negotiate and find out the kind of role that support staff wish to play.

Draw on any prior experience of your support staff, for instance with a particular class or child.

Explore the kind of expertise that your support staff can offer, perhaps in a specific curriculum area.

Encourage your assistant to give his or her own ideas about how best to deliver lessons and manage the classroom.

Involve your assistant when you are talking to the class – establish to the children that you are working as a team.

Encourage your assistant to maintain the same expectations and boundaries as you do. Clamp down on any students who expect to get away with different behaviour with you and with your assistant.

Find out how your assistant prefers to work – would he or she like to be involved in lesson planning, in differentiating tasks, or simply deliver the work that you prepare?

Ask too whether your assistant prefers to work within the classroom setting, or to take individuals or small groups to work elsewhere.

Try not to dump all the difficult or dull jobs on your assistant – don’t view him or her as someone who is there to remove challenging children from the class.

Dealing with senior management

In your first year you will probably have very little reason to deal directly with senior management. If you have problems you will usually turn to one of the following people:

- your induction tutor;
- your line manager;
- in a secondary school your head of department;
- for issues with a tutor group, a head of year or other pastoral manager.

If you choose to apply for promotion, you will have increasing contact with senior managers. It is useful to have these staff on your side, as
they can assist you if you have any major problems or if you need approval, for instance for a trip or time off. Remember that members of the senior management of a school are ‘on duty’ at all times, so bear this in mind when you are dealing with them. Be careful what you say – what you see as a joke might be taken in the wrong way. I’m not suggesting that you need to crawl to senior staff, but don’t forget who decides promotions in a school.
Parents

Your children’s parents and carers play a crucial part in the success of your work with the children. You will quickly see that those students who come from a supportive, caring home are far more likely to do well at school. In this chapter you will find ideas about developing your relationship with parents, thoughts about coping with parents’ evenings, and also an examination of some of the different types of parents you might meet.

I use the term ‘parents’ throughout this chapter to describe whoever takes care of the child at home. There are many different types of family unit and a wide range of people who might be responsible for caring for your students. The term ‘parents’ is used to include all of these: from single parent families, to guardians such as foster parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, cared for children and so on.

Developing the teacher–parent relationship

Using the analogy between a school and a business, the parents of a student are the clients of the business. Of course, unless you are working at a private school, the parents are not paying directly for your ‘services’, but they are still doing so indirectly, through taxation. All parents are entitled to know (and will demand) that the service offered by your school, and by you individually as a teacher, matches their expectations. As in any business, it is important to develop a good relationship with your clients. This is especially important in education because the parents can back-up the work that you do in school with their child in the home. Here are some ideas about how you might develop your own relationship with the parents of your children:

- Explain how they can support you: Many parents would like to support the work done by teachers, but are unsure how to do this.
Communicate this information to them: reading with their child each night, helping the student learn spellings, ensuring homework is completed, supporting you in keeping tabs on a child's behaviour.

- **Use parents as a source of information:** You might ask your children to bring in information gathered at home from their family, for instance details of a family tree for a history project or statistics about the size of the family for maths work. Students could tape a conversation with their parents, perhaps for a project about the local area.

- **Invite them into your classroom/school:** Some parents are willing to help to the extent that they will actually come into the classroom to assist the teacher. If this would be useful, find out whether any of your parents are interested. Parents might help with listening to readers or with putting up displays. Some parents are keen to help with general school events, for instance sewing costumes for a school play.

- **Get involved with your PTA:** Schools will have a parent–teacher group, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), which aims to strengthen the links between home and school. This group has a role in raising funds for the school. If you have the time or inclination, it is useful to get involved with the PTA. You might also request some funds from the PTA for a project in your own class or department.

**Communicating with parents**

It is vital to keep the channels of communication open with parents. This is typically much easier in the primary school, where you have only one set of parents to deal with, and there are more opportunities for informal contact. In the secondary school, you will need to make a concerted effort to communicate with parents. You might communicate via:

- **The informal chat:** At the lower end of primary school, you will probably meet parents on a daily basis: in the morning when they drop the child off and in the afternoon at going home time. It is fairly straightforward to develop some sort of relationship and communicate any worries. If you need to talk to parents in more detail, ask whether they could attend a quick meeting after school.
The formal report: One of the main formalized communications with the home is formal reports during the school year. Reports offer a good form of communication, although they have their limitations. The report is often a one-way process: the teacher informing the parents rather than having a dialogue with them. In some schools, parents or students are asked to give a response to reports and this is a useful step towards building a dialogue.

The parents' evening: The parents' evening offers a better chance to communicate with parents, although again in reality this is typically a brief encounter offering little chance of detailed conversation. You can find lots more information below about parents' evenings. In some schools an entire day is devoted to student reviews.

Via student diaries: Most schools now use a student diary or reading diary, and this can be a useful way of communicating with parents. Aim to have a regular time when you check diaries and respond to any comments from parents.

The school newsletter: Similarly, most schools now hand out some kind of weekly or monthly newsletter. Find out the deadline for handing in copy to go in the newsletter, and use this as a way to communicate with parents.

The class newsletter: Some teachers like to send an informal newsletter home about what is going on with the class. This might include information about the topics you are currently studying, details of trips, etc.

The school website: Again, many schools now have their own website. Encourage parents to visit this to check up on the things that are going on in your school. You might upload pictures of displays, details of topics being covered, information about trips, etc.

The telephone call: One of the best ways to communicate with parents is by telephone, because it is direct and instantaneous. Don't always focus on using the telephone for negative incidents — behaviour problems or missing homework; the promise of a call is also an excellent way to motivate your children. Before you call home, check that it's okay to do this with the appropriate member of staff. You should be able to find phone numbers in the register or by asking office staff for assistance. If you talk directly to parents, you will often find them very willing to back you up. Students seem remarkably impressed by teachers who phone home. Most children genuinely care what their parents think about them.
◆ The letter: Most schools (and many secondary school departments) will have a variety of standard letters that you can send home, for instance if coursework is missing. This will save you the time spent in getting through on the telephone. However, it does lack the directness of speaking to a parent on the phone.

The parents' evening

One of the scariest experiences in your induction year will be your first ever parents' evening. As a trainee, although you may have come into contact with parents or carers, you will not have had to face them in such a formalized setting. Here are a few thoughts to help you prepare for this nerve-racking occasion. Remember that after a few parents' evenings you will wonder what you were ever scared about.

Appointments

In the run-up to the evening you may be asked to book time slots for each parent. Don’t worry too much about the accuracy of this. Inevitably, people are late or get delayed talking to other teachers. It is rare that you will stick exactly to the appointment times, although try your best. Appointment times are good for giving the students the sense that the parents' evening is an important event.

If you only have a small number of parents to see, aim to bunch appointments together so you are not left waiting around. You might try to leave yourself free for the first half hour so that you have longer to relax at the end of the school day; you might aim to leave the last half hour free so that you can go home early. Some teachers will have a large number of parents to see, for instance if you teach a secondary subject such as music or drama. If this is the case you might only book slots with those students who are raising concerns. You should still give other students the opportunity to see you if they really want.

Preparation

Avoid making copious amounts of notes before the parents' evening – you are unlikely to refer to them. It is better to be natural and talk to the parents about your own impressions of their child. If you feel it would help, have a few points written down to raise, perhaps a concern about homework, or a query about an extended period of absence.

Aim to have a break before the evening starts. You may find that there is half an hour to an hour between the end of school and the start
of the parents’ evening. If not, aim for a quiet last lesson so you are not harried when the parents start to arrive. Have a snack and a drink, as you may not finish until late. If possible bring some fresh clothes – you may feel rather ‘creased’ after a day’s teaching and you can bring a smart outfit to change into. Looking businesslike will help you feel ready to face the parents.

They’re more scared of you …
Many of the parents will be as or even more nervous than you are. Keep this in mind and aim to put them at ease. When they arrive, stand up and shake hands and identify the student they ‘belong’ to. If the child is with them, you have an added advantage, as you can praise (or embarrass) the student in front of his or her parents. If the student does attend the meeting, a good starter question is: ‘How do you think you’ve been getting on?’

The discussion
Keep your discussion short and concise. There is no need to waffle on, it will make you tired and will have little value. Comment on the student’s work to date and give some ideas for targets where the parents may be able to help, for example ensuring homework is completed properly. If parents have any specific queries and you are not sure what the answer is, make a brief note and say that you will talk to a more senior teacher. To draw the discussion to a close, ask the parents if they have any questions.

Problems/problem parents
Although it is unusual, you may find yourself in a situation where parents become confrontational, perhaps criticizing the way you teach or the type of work you are setting. As an inexperienced teacher, this can be difficult to handle. If this does happen try to remain calm and rational, using the techniques discussed in Chapter 3 to defuse the situation. You might suggest a meeting with a senior teacher at another time. In this way the parents can discuss their concerns in a private setting and you will have the support of a more experienced colleague.

Missing
Inevitably, some parents will not turn up, either because they were busy, because they did not want to come or because the student did not tell them that there was a parents’ evening. It is often the case that the
parents you most want or need to talk to do not arrive. Aim to check up on any students you are worried about. Your school may have a system where they do this for you, but if you have strong concerns make a phone call home yourself (having told the appropriate pastoral manager that you are going to do this).

Types of parent

You will come across a variety of parents in your teaching career: the majority being genuinely supportive people who want to help you succeed in teaching their child. A minority of parents, unfortunately, will be less helpful and some may prove very difficult to deal with. Always stay calm, polite and professional when you are speaking to parents, no matter how much they antagonize you. A good way to avoid confrontation is to use some of the tactics you would employ with a difficult student.

I would like to offer you a few brief ideas about how to deal with some different types of parents, although obviously each parent is an individual. Again, the way you deal with parents will vary a great deal according to the situation you find yourself in and also the policies of your school or department. The best advice is to concentrate on doing your job as well as you can, and not to worry too much if you come across the occasional conflict.

Supportive parents

Supportive parents are a delight to work with: they believe that you know your job, but they are there to back you up should you ever need it. They encourage their children to do the best they can and to take the work and homework you set seriously. Where possible involve this type of parent as much as you can with the school, for instance asking them to visit your class to give a talk or to help individual students with their work.

Overambitious parents

It is difficult to deal with this type of parent. They want the best for their children, but unfortunately their ambitions sometimes outstrip what the children are capable of, or what the students want for themselves. These parents can make life difficult for the teacher, asking why you have set particular work and suggesting that you don’t know how to do your job. The best policy with this type of parent is to
humour them, but not to alter what you have decided to teach because of them.

**Overprotective parents**
Some parents worry a great deal about how their children are settling into school, and because of this have a negative impact on the child's confidence. Try to answer their worries, particularly if you are the child's tutor or primary class teacher. Keep reassuring them that you will look out for their child and promise to contact them if there are any serious problems. The overprotective parent might be a useful candidate for a classroom volunteer – then the parent can see how the child is coping, and can help some of the children who need additional assistance.

**Parents who abdicate responsibility**
This type of parent believes that the child is the school’s problem, and that you should deal with any difficulties that come up. They believe that their responsibility ends when the child leaves home each morning. With these parents, be aware that the child may see school in a negative light and will probably need lots of praise and encouragement.

**Potentially abusive parents**
If you suspect that a child is being abused at home, you should notify your child protection officer and the appropriate pastoral or senior manager immediately. They may be aware of the situation, but you would not be doing your job (and you would be failing the child) if you did not make your concerns known. It is not your responsibility to deal with such serious problems and you do not have the specialist knowledge required to do so. Pass your concerns on, in writing, straight away.

**Dealing with complaints**
From time to time, parents will complain, either about what or how you are teaching. You will know whether these complaints are justified, and for the most part they will not be. Unfortunately they really are just part of the job. Stick to your guns – if the work you have set is in line with departmental or school policies, if the sanctions you have given are fair and the student has earned them, then you are acting professionally. Be confident in yourself: even though you have only
just started teaching, you have undertaken the appropriate training for your role.

If a parent complains directly to you, talk to a more experienced member of staff before responding. Your induction tutor, pastoral manager or head of department will have experience in dealing with parents and can help you decide what to do. Explain the situation as clearly as you can, stating exactly what you have done and why. Your colleagues should be more than willing to back you up. If the parent complains indirectly, perhaps to your head of department or line manager, find out exactly what they said and again make your position clear. Do not worry too much. As I have said these complaints really are unavoidable, even for the best and most experienced teachers in a school.
V

Just Part of the Job
Meetings and extra-curricular activities

After a long day at school, you will find at least some of your evenings taken up with meetings and probably with extra-curricular activities as well. Depending on how well they are run, meetings can feel like a very valuable part of your job, or a complete waste of time. The extra-curricular work you do after school will generally offer a much more positive experience. Many of the staff who run these activities do so not because it is a statutory requirement, but because they genuinely enjoy the experience. In this chapter you can find some ideas about meetings, as well as about the plus and minus sides of involvement in extra-curricular activities.

The staff meeting

Generally speaking there are two kinds of staff meeting: the regular briefing-type meeting that is fairly short and deals with the day-to-day practicalities of running a school; and the formalized meeting of all the staff that takes place perhaps once a term. The main features of each type of meeting differ quite substantially.

The staff briefing

Depending on the school where you are teaching, there may be a staff briefing once a day, once or twice a week, or perhaps on a less regular basis. This type of meeting allows the different staff within the school to communicate important information quickly and easily to each other. In a large school this is a useful way of informing all the staff at once of an upcoming event or a problem with a student.

This type of meeting will usually be far less formal than the staff meeting and there will probably not be an agenda. The briefing may be opened by the the head or deputy head giving information to the staff, for instance about promotions or exclusions. The other members of staff may then be invited to raise any points or issues.
There are certain members of staff who will normally need to speak at this briefing: special needs staff may give bulletins about the latest student assessments or new IEPs, pastoral managers might give updates on particular students; heads of department or curriculum co-ordinators may give information about trips or forthcoming events such as training courses in their subject area, and so on. If you have anything you need the entire staff to know urgently, this is the forum at which to say it. At first it can be rather nerve-racking to address a staffroom full of people, but you will soon get used to it.

The formal staff meeting
Formal staff meetings are part of your directed time – the statutory hours that a teacher must work – as opposed to the actual voluntary hours you might put in. These formal staff meetings are usually timetabled well in advance on the school calendar. They will normally take place after school, probably in the staffroom or another room big enough to take all the staff. They might also take place on an INSET day at the start or end of term. Formal staff meetings may go on for up to two hours or more, although in most cases they would be about an hour long. The head will probably publish an agenda the week before the meeting takes place and put it in your pigeon-hole or on a staff noticeboard.

Often the head and deputies do most of the speaking at these meetings. The meeting will usually cover whole-school issues, such as development plans, inspection visits or new policies. Depending on the size of your school, you may be required to contribute, or merely to soak up the information being given. These meetings may also be given over to group work where you are required to discuss an issue in a smaller group and then report your ideas back to the whole staff.

The department/subject meeting
In the secondary school you will also have regular department meetings (perhaps once a fortnight/month), at which you discuss subject-specific issues. These may take place before or after school, or perhaps in a lunchtime or free period when everyone in the department is available. In a large department, these meetings are an important means of communicating information between different teachers. If run well, department meetings are a valuable source for updating staff. They will
also give you the chance to mix more regularly with the other members of your department.

At these meetings, members of the department share information: details of syllabus requirements, upcoming exams, schemes of work, visits, and so on. If someone in your department attends a working party at the school, for instance on whole-school assessment policies, they might have information to disseminate. Your head of department could also decide to use some of your meeting time to moderate work, for instance GCSE coursework, or plan termly or yearly schemes.

In the primary school, you may be required to attend meetings devoted to specific curriculum subjects. For instance, the school's literacy co-ordinator might run a meeting about new developments in the literacy strategy. These meetings offer a good opportunity to pick up new teaching ideas and techniques to use in your classroom.

**The meetings trap**

As well as these 'statutory' meetings, there will be many other meetings going on after school. Your presence will not be required at most of these, as attendance is often limited to staff in positions of responsibility. However, there could also be other working parties that meet perhaps once per half-term.

At the start of the year, each department or key stage may be asked to put forward staff to sit on these working parties. Depending on the way your school is set up and run, these meetings are either a complete waste of time, or a very valuable chance to contribute to what happens in the school. As with extra-curricular activities, it can be valuable to be able to say you were on a working party when you apply for other jobs, as it shows you are willing to get involved in every aspect of the running of a school. Similarly, you may value the chance to meet staff from other departments or areas of the school, and you may have some excellent ideas or a specialism of your own that you would like to develop.

Do not feel pressurized into joining these working parties unless you are sure you have the time. No one will mind if an inexperienced teacher does not volunteer to help out, but you could find that others take advantage because you are fresh, uncynical and enthusiastic to offer your services. If you can guarantee that you will only have to attend a couple of meetings a term, and make no other time-consuming contributions, then it may be worth your while volunteering. However,
beware of the 'meetings trap' whereby you end up doing lots of additional paperwork, writing plans, disseminating information to your department and so on. If you are involved with a lot of extra-curricular activities, for instance if you teach sport, drama or music, you will have a very good get-out clause.

**Extra-curricular activities**

People often associate extra-curricular activities with teachers who are specialists in particular subjects, for instance drama teachers (the school play), music teachers (the school choir and orchestra) and PE teachers (football, netball teams, and so on). However, there is no reason why this should be so and it is worth getting involved with this aspect of the school if you possibly can, even if you do not see yourself as a specialist. Below you can find some thoughts about the advantages and disadvantages of getting involved with extra-curricular activities.

**The advantages**

In my experience, the advantages of taking part in extra-curricular activities far outweigh the disadvantages. In some schools, or if you are a teacher of certain subjects, there may be an element of compulsion for you to participate. Even if this is not the case, it is still worth getting involved. Do be careful though not to take on too much while you are an NQT. Here are some thoughts about the advantages of extra-curricular work:

- **Getting to know the students:** Foremost among the advantages is the opportunity to get to know the students in a more relaxed environment. You will also meet children who are not in your class, ones you would not normally teach or talk to. Unless you teach in a very small school, it is probable that you will only encounter a fraction of the school population at any one time. When you do meet these children, perhaps a year or two later, they will already have had good experiences with you and are likely to feel much more positive about you.

- **Showing yourself as a 'real' person:** Because extra-curricular activities take place outside the constraints of the normal school environment, you can approach them in a more relaxed and natural manner. Consequently, the children will get to see an entirely different side of you; this can have considerable benefits for your relationship with them in the classroom.
Helping out your colleagues: Those teachers who undertake extra-curricular work as part of their job (for instance drama or PE teachers) are very grateful for any help you can offer. The nature of teachers means that they will probably find some way to reciprocate in the future.

Seeing another side of your students: It may also surprise you to discover that students considered difficult in academic subjects become completely different during extra-curricular activities. Many of them will have talents in areas you had never suspected. It is rewarding for both student and teacher to see success and achievement taking place.

Useful for the CV: Being able to show a willingness to participate in all aspects of school life is seen as an indicator of a keen and enthusiastic teacher. It will provide you with a very positive point for your curriculum vitae (CV) and for letters of application for future posts.

New skills and experiences: Participating in life outside the school day will mean you undergo a variety of experiences and develop a range of skills. For instance, if you do the lighting for your school play, you will extend or discover technical skills that could enhance your teaching. You will also show the ability to work as a member of a team. This area is not always a strong one for teachers, because by its nature the job is a solo activity.

Personal satisfaction: Finally, you will find personal satisfaction from taking part in extra-curricular activities. You can stretch and extend yourself, perhaps into areas where you were previously unsure or where you lacked confidence.

The disadvantages
There are some negative aspects to getting involved with activities after school, although I would argue that these are heavily outweighed by the more positive ones. However, as an NQT it is important to think carefully before becoming involved, and to balance up the pros and cons. Here are some thoughts about why you might want to limit your involvement:

The time commitment: The most important point to consider is the time consideration: how much time can you afford to take away from your planning, marking and administrative loads? If, for instance, you get involved with a school football team, you could find yourself working late after school perhaps two or three nights
a week. You would probably want to accompany your team to matches and these may take place on a Saturday or Sunday morning. A commitment to extra-curricular activities means giving up your own free time. If you have children or other personal commitments, it might be impossible for you to make the time commitment involved.

- An escalating commitment?: Once you start getting involved after school, extra-curricular activities have a tendency to escalate. The other staff and the school management see that you are willing, and perhaps try to push you into becoming over-involved and taking on more responsibility than you should.

- The views of your managers: On the other hand, the management at your school may feel that inexperienced teachers should be concentrating on developing their classroom practice, and may actively discourage you from getting involved. If this is the case, for instance if you have an induction tutor who feels you should focus on your teaching work, then consider waiting until you have passed your NQT year.

**Some tips on trips**

One of the most memorable school experiences for many children is the chance to go on a trip. Some might not otherwise have this opportunity, perhaps because of financial considerations. Trips can seem like a great adventure for students because they get out of school and see a little of the real world. Of course, trips also have a very valid educational justification. For the teacher, too, a trip is the chance to get out of school for a day or more and get to know the students better in a different environment.

If you are approached to take part in a trip, for instance a visit to a museum, an art gallery or the theatre, say 'yes' immediately. There is no reason why a relatively inexperienced teacher should not organize a trip. If you are interested in doing this, or in taking part in a trip that someone else has arranged, read the following tips carefully:

- **Follow the school policy to the letter:** First and foremost I would caution you to ensure that your school or LEA trips' policy is followed to the letter. If you are arranging a trip as an NQT, find a more experienced colleague who is willing to support and assist you. There are legal obligations involved with taking students out
of school and it is very important that you are aware of these. You are in loco parentis – in the role of a parent – and if there are any problems you are legally responsible. You will also need to complete paperwork such as risk assessments and so on. However, as long as you are careful and follow the policy to the letter, you will find organizing a trip a very worthwhile experience.

- **Have plenty of supervision:** The normal requirement for a staff to student ratio would be around one adult for every ten students, although this varies according to the age of the children. If you are taking a large group try to find a range of teachers from different subject areas or age groups to accompany you. This will give the children the benefit of a wider range of personalities and will also allow you to get to know some more of the school staff in a relaxed environment.

- **Be aware of all the administrative jobs:** Before you go you will need to send letters home, asking for permission, and also for a voluntary contribution towards the costs. You will have to oversee the collection of return slips and money, which can prove to be an administrative nightmare, so make sure you leave sufficient time before the trip to do this. Schools should have a budget set aside to help students who cannot afford the cost of trips so check how this works before you start. You should also find out where and how to pay in the money you receive. In reality, you may find that you have to use your own money or credit card in order to finance the trip initially. This, along with all the organizational and safety issues, is what puts many teachers off organizing and making trips.

- **Organize transport carefully:** If the trip is by coach, you will need to find a suitable company. Ask other staff for advice – geography teachers will often have this information because they have to organize field trips. If the trip is taking place outside of normal school hours, you should arrange a meeting-place for your students. At the end of the trip this could be where you will 'drop them off'. Make sure you supervise them until they have all been collected.

- **Keep an eye on behaviour:** The students will probably get excited during the trip: it is your duty to calm them down and ensure that they behave themselves. Normally, however, this is not a problem, as they will be enjoying their day out and will not want to jeopardize it with poor behaviour.

- **Put it on your CV:** Finally, remember that organizing trips is an excellent experience to have on your CV when you apply for jobs.
It shows initiative and also, as with any extra-curricular activity, a willingness to become involved with all aspects of school life. If you do not have the opportunity or confidence to organize your own trip, aim to get invited on a trip organized by other members of staff. The advantages of doing so are the same as with extra-curricular activities. And sometimes a day out of school can be just what you need.
Your teaching practices will have given you a good idea of what life as a teacher is really like, but it is only during your first year in the profession that you actually become a teacher. Part of the whole process of becoming a qualified teacher is passing your NQT year. The actual arrangements for induction or probation vary in different areas of the country, but overall the process has a number of similarities. In this chapter you can find out all about what to expect during your NQT year, including tips on how to do your best during appraisals. In addition, you'll find some advice and ideas about inspection.

Do try not to focus too much on 'passing induction/inspection' or on 'passing your NQT year'. The key to success is to concentrate on what really matters, i.e. how well the children are doing and how you are developing your skills in the classroom to help them learn. If you do the job to the best of your ability, the probability is that you will succeed.

**Induction: what to expect**

The government publishes guidelines that specify what should happen during your induction year. Of course, how well these are followed will vary from school to school. If you are lucky, your induction tutor or mentor will be experienced, effective and, perhaps most importantly, available when you need to talk. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case.

It can be difficult as an NQT to complain if the induction guidelines are not being followed – make sure you know about your entitlements and what to do if they are not being met. Remember that it is you who will pass or fail, and this could depend on the kind of support your school offers. Make it a priority to read up on the relevant guidance. Turn to your LEA or union for support if things are not going well.
During induction you can expect to receive the following:

- Help and support from experienced teachers.
- Non-contact time to help you cope with and adapt to the workload. You should not have to teach for more than 90% of a normal timetable.
- Observations of your lessons.
- Assessments of your teaching, both formal and informal.
- Setting of targets and objectives on which you can work.
- Professional development, for instance additional training.

For lots more detailed information about exactly what induction involves, see the internet links in Appendix Two, or read my book *Guerrilla Guide to Teaching*.

**The role of the induction tutor**

Your induction tutor plays a vital role when you start teaching: he or she is the person you turn to if you have any questions or problems. Your tutor is also responsible for watching some of your lessons to evaluate your progress. The induction tutor should check that you are not taking on too much on top of your classroom role. If you are lucky enough to have a good and supportive tutor, this will make your NQT year much easier.

You should have regular meetings with your tutor, in which you set targets, assess your progress and deal with any concerns that you may have. A little way into your first term, you should discuss your first formal evaluation. Hopefully, your tutor will allow you to choose a particular subject or class for this observation. It is not necessarily beneficial to choose an ‘easy’ lesson: it may be better to prove to your tutor and to yourself that you can deal with difficult or challenging subjects or students.

**Getting the most from your induction tutor**

As a new teacher, you may feel at a disadvantage in the relationship between you and your tutor, who will have more experience than you. Remember, though, that your tutor will probably have volunteered for the role and will be keen for you to do well. The tips below will help
you in getting the most from your induction tutor, and in developing a good relationship:

- **Be proactive:** As an NQT who is new to the school and the staff, it can be hard to push your own wishes to the fore. Teachers are busy people, and it may prove difficult to find as much time as you would like to spend with your tutor. If you find that your relationship is not developing as it should, be proactive about the situation rather than sitting back and letting things deteriorate.

- **Set a specific time to meet:** Find out when your tutor is available to sit and talk to you, rather than trying to catch up during a break. If possible set a specific time when you meet for a discussion.

- **Explain your responsibilities:** Let the tutor know when you take on other responsibilities. This shows your willingness and enthusiasm, and it will also help your tutor keep an eye on your overall workload. Your tutor should be able to advise you about whether these extra activities are a good idea.

- **Get lots of information:** Ask your tutor early on about what the induction process involves: how many meetings and lesson evaluations you should expect; how much detail you will need to include in your lesson planning and longer-term schemes of work.

- **Be honest about any difficulties:** If you are having problems, don’t keep them to yourself. Share your worries with your induction tutor and he or she should be able to help and advise you. During a lesson evaluation, if the class is a difficult one, be honest with your tutor and explain the problems you have had. It will prove impressive for the tutor to see you trying and hopefully succeeding with a difficult class or lesson. Having said this, do not ask your tutor to watch you teach the proverbial ‘nightmare’ class or lesson, at least in the first term.

### Preparing for appraisal

Even experienced teachers are required to undergo regular appraisals, evaluations or observations; this type of ‘testing’ should be viewed as an important and useful part of your job. Appraisers take different approaches when they evaluate a class: some like to get involved, moving around to question the students, to look at books (and check your marking) and to help anyone who needs it; others may simply sit in a corner at the back of the room and watch what goes on from there.
You could ask your appraiser ahead of time whether he or she is willing to assist you in a particular part of the lesson. This would demonstrate initiative on your part and, if your appraiser happens to be a teacher in your subject area, he or she could be a valuable resource for you.

When you (or your appraiser) have chosen a lesson for evaluation, you should prepare carefully for this formalized review. You will, of course, have been observed many times during your training. Indeed, recent graduates are perhaps better prepared for this process than those who have been in teaching for a long time. You will have many things on your mind when you are being appraised, but it is important for you to show what a good classroom teacher you are. The tips below will help you do just that:

- **Show your appraiser the lesson plan:** Your observer will probably ask to see a copy of your lesson plan beforehand. If this does not happen, demonstrate how well organized you are by offering a copy at the start of the lesson. The tutor may be able to give you advice in advance: perhaps you will not be showing a sufficiently wide range of skills to be evaluated; maybe you are aiming to do too much in the time available.

- **Use a mix of approaches:** Your appraiser wants to see you utilizing a variety of methods in your teaching: the teacher giving instructions, the students taking part in discussions, doing individual and group work and so on. He or she also wants to see the students engaged in a variety of activities, taking different learning styles into account. Avoid the temptation to have too much going on at once, though, as this could cause discipline problems.

- **Be well prepared:** If you are planning to use any equipment, for instance a film clip to illustrate a subject, check well beforehand that it is available and working. If you are going to need materials such as paper, pens, paints or photocopies, don’t scrabble around five minutes before the lesson trying to sort them out. If you are planning a practical demonstration, go through it once beforehand to make sure you know what you are doing.

- **Use interesting resources:** It is always worth being inventive with the resources you use, as the students will respond more positively. Your observer should be impressed and interested in your ideas.

- **Stick to what you know:** Now is not the time to try something completely new with your class — you will confuse the students and they may misbehave. They will be aware that something
different is going on. A comment such as ‘we don't normally do this, miss/sir’ would be embarrassing for you.

- **Take care with timing**: Your appraiser will watch the opening and ending of your lesson particularly closely, as one of the most obvious signs of a well-prepared and organized teacher is how these times are managed. Make sure you have an orderly start and finish. Keep a close eye on the clock – don’t get so caught up in your teaching that you run out of time.

- **Demonstrate your classroom management skills**: Aim to impress not only with good subject content, but also by how well you can control the students. In the run-up to your evaluation, refer the class back to the boundaries you set at the beginning of term, particularly if it has been a while since you last discussed them.

- **Remain positive**: It is very tempting, when you are under the stress of being tested, to start reacting negatively when the children play up. Stick closely to the boundaries you have set. Give out plenty of rewards to those doing well; apply any sanctions firmly and fairly as required. If you look as though you mean business, and if the children have built up respect for you, the class should work both with you and for you.

- **Warn the class?**: This is a matter of individual taste: should you warn the class that someone will be watching them, or just wait and see how they react when your appraiser turns up? If you warn them in advance, try something like: ‘Mrs Johnson will be coming to watch our class on Thursday to see what we’re doing and how we’re getting on.’ Do not tell them directly that you are being appraised, although some of them will probably work it out for themselves.

- **Marking**: Make sure that your marking is fully up to date. However, do not alter your marking policy just because your appraiser is going to be looking at the books. The students will soon pipe up: ‘Miss, you never normally mark our books like this!’

- **Relax**: Above all, remember you are only just starting out as a teacher – you don’t have to be perfect. No one will realistically expect you to have mastered every aspect of being a teacher, otherwise there would be no point in appraisal. Even the most experienced teachers can have an ‘off’ day. Remember that appraisers are teachers too – they will understand!
Feedback

After the appraisal, get the feedback you are entitled to, as soon as possible. Teachers are busy people, but there is no point in being appraised if you do not find out what you did right or wrong and how you might improve. For your formal assessments, you should receive both verbal feedback and a formalized written evaluation, which may take a little time to prepare. Once you have heard what your appraiser has to say, put forward your own opinions. The tutor will want to see that you can evaluate your own teaching. One of the best ways for you to improve and progress is by learning to see what went wrong or right in your own lessons, and why.

Your appraiser should also set you some targets and objectives to work towards for your next evaluation. There might be about three of these, and they should cover any problem areas that the induction tutor feels you need to work on. You should receive a copy of your formal written evaluation and the school will put another copy on your personnel file. Your appraiser will probably ask you to read the evaluation and to sign it to show that you have had the opportunity to discuss it.

Surviving inspection

How unlucky do you have to be for your school to receive an inspection when you have only just started teaching? Statistically, the chances must be quite slim, but it is by no means impossible. The longer you stay at any school, the more chance there is that the inspectors will pay a visit sooner or later. The ‘failing’ schools and ‘failing’ teachers rooted out by the inspectors receive a great deal of publicity; the successful and thriving schools seem to get very little.

Preparing for inspection

If you are at a school that is likely to do badly in its inspection, remember that as an inexperienced teacher you have very little responsibility. As long as you are doing your job in the classroom to the best of your ability, and consistently striving to improve your teaching, there is very little for you to worry about. As someone who has just come into the profession, all the latest developments will be fresh in your memory. You may also be more enthusiastic and have more energy than the teachers who have been in the job for a long time.
In the old days, when I began teaching, schools would receive warning of an inspection well in advance. This advance warning had its good and bad points: it gave the school plenty of time to prepare, to get documentation in place, to help the weaker teachers improve (and perhaps exclude some of the more difficult students). However, it also led to a climate of expectation in which rumours abounded about the horrors of inspection. These days there is a much shorter lead-in time before the inspectors arrive, although schools will have some sense of when an inspection is likely to occur.

The myths
The myths about inspection seem to multiply and take on a life of their own. The senior managers at your school will, of course, be under a lot of stress during an inspection. They may warn you that everything you say will be taken down and used in evidence against the school; that the inspectors will be particularly concerned with your subject or age range; that every lesson plan and department handbook will be closely scrutinized.

It is possible that you will be asked to use a particular format to prepare your lesson plans and your school may work itself into a frenzy, checking that handbooks and schemes of work are sorted out. You may be warned that, if the inspectors come to see you and don’t like what they see, they will keep returning again and again to your class. The myth might circulate that you are sacked on the spot if you ‘fail’ (i.e. if you receive a bad score for a particular lesson).

The reality
In reality, it is likely that your lessons will be observed no more than a few times during an inspection, if at all. There are often relatively few inspectors to go around and some inspectors will cover more than one subject or age range. In an inspection at my first school, when we reached Thursday of the inspection week and I still had not been ‘seen’, my head of department had to request that someone observed one of my lessons so that the inspectors could see the practice going on in our department. This situation may, of course, vary in a smaller school or at primary level. However, even if you are ‘seen’ by the inspectors on several occasions, this does not mean that they have found anything wrong with your teaching.

When an inspector arrives in your lesson he or she might ask for a copy of the lesson plan, so have this easily to hand. Even if you are not asked, hand over the lesson plan anyway. After all, you have spent all
that time preparing for your moment of glory and you should show the inspectors exactly how good you are. Irritatingly, this means that you will have to have detailed plans ready for every lesson that you are due to teach while the inspectors are in the building. However, the amount of information required is not great. It is fairly unlikely that the inspector, with a full timetable of classes to watch, will be able to stay for the entire length of the lesson. It is of course likely that they will leave just as the best bit of your lesson begins.

Inspection and the NQT
As a new teacher you will probably have no curriculum responsibility and will only be responsible for ensuring that you teach your own class or classes properly. This means that if a secondary school department is disorganized, it will not be you who comes under fire. The head of your department has responsibility for ensuring that all documentation is correct and in place: schemes of work, handbooks and so on. If an inspector comes to watch your lessons, he or she will know that you are an NQT and should take this into account. Above all, don’t panic – do the job to the best of your ability, and have confidence in your teaching.
Onwards and Upwards
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Towards the end of your first year, you may find yourself considering your future in the profession. You will be encouraged to consider how you might develop yourself as a professional, whether this is by applying for promotion or by taking courses to learn new skills and further your teaching qualifications. In this chapter I deal with the issues of professional development and promotion. Even if you decide not to step onto the promotions ladder at this stage, it is still worth considering how you might wish to move onwards and upwards within your current school, or elsewhere, in the future.

Professional development

Your training as a teacher does not end once you qualify, and your school should give you the opportunity for further development. This might take the form of training in school, which is generally referred to as INSET (in-service training) or twilight sessions (training held after the school day has finished). You should also get the chance to attend public training courses. You might even be offered support or sponsorship to do a postgraduate qualification such as an MA, perhaps part-time or in the evenings. This is all part of your entitlement to EPD (early professional development) and CPD (continuing professional development). I would advise that you take as many training opportunities as you can. There are a number of reasons why this is so:

- **Professional development**: Courses offer you a chance to develop and update your knowledge about teaching, whether this is about a specific subject, or an area such as behaviour management or assessment for learning.
- **A chance for a break**: Going on a course means getting a day, or even several days, out of school. This can be especially useful in
the second term, when you could do with a break from the day-to-day routine.

- **Useful for your CV:** It is important to show an interest in maintaining your subject knowledge and extending your skills. Going on a course gives you the chance to refresh yourself, both personally and professionally, and to demonstrate your enthusiasm to continue learning after you have qualified.

### Aiming for promotion?

At some point in your teaching career, you will need to decide just how far you would like to advance. Towards the end of your NQT year is a good time to do this – you will still hopefully be enthusiastic about the profession, and you will have the benefit of a year’s experience of what the job is really like. Below are some thoughts about aiming for promotion:

- **Promotions rely on many different factors:** Promotions in teaching rely on a number of issues, not just how good you are at your job. Being in the right place at the right time when a post becomes available is often a key element in gaining promotion. Being the right kind of person to fit into the management structure is also important.

- **You may need to move school to find promotion:** Because of the limited movement available within any one school, you may find that no promotion opportunities occur. This is to do with jobs becoming available and also the fact that teachers have a tendency to stay in post, particularly in well-run schools. You may need to consider moving to another school to further your career.

- **The nature of your job will change:** As you get promoted, your teaching timetable will generally become a little lighter. For instance, a head of department in a secondary school may only teach 18 hours a week, while the typical teacher is timetabled for 21 hours. A head of year may have a timetable of 15 hours a week: meeting parents, attending case conferences and so on all take up time. Consider whether you want to spend less and less time in the classroom. If your aim is to become a deputy head or head of a school, you will find yourself spending very little time teaching, and far more on management and administrative tasks.

- **There’s nothing wrong with staying in the classroom:** There is quite a
lot of pressure in teaching to aim for promotion, but there is no compulsion to do so. Some teachers dedicate their careers to becoming the best teacher they can be: they do not want to leave the classroom or take on any management tasks; they find satisfaction in committing themselves to their students. The new threshold and advanced skills teacher arrangements are a step towards recognizing the value of classroom expertise.

◆ Promotion means better pay: Of course, one of the reasons many teachers aim for promotion is financial: as a classroom teacher you will reach the ceiling of the standard pay scale after around seven years. The points that come with promotion will boost your salary, although never by a substantial amount. Even the head of a large secondary school will only be earning a fraction of what he or she could get in a commensurate position in industry.

◆ Different types of promotion are available: If you decide to aim for promotion, there are generally two types of promoted position: pastoral and curriculum. A pastoral role involves looking after the students’ needs and welfare, while a curriculum role includes teaching and managing a specific subject or group of subjects.

### Types of promotion

The table below shows some likely routes for promotion in a secondary school. In the primary school the options are a little more limited – here you might move into a subject co-ordinator’s role before becoming a deputy or assistant head.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastoral</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deputy head of year/house</td>
<td>Key Stage 3/4 co-ordinator (often only English, maths and science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of year/house</td>
<td>Deputy head of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy or assistant head-teacher</td>
<td>Head of department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>Head of faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The advantages of promotion

When you are deciding whether or not to go for promotion, it is worth taking some time to consider the pros and cons. The advantages of taking a promoted post would include:

◆ *A salary increase:* One of the main and most obvious attractions of taking a promotion is the resulting increase in salary you can expect. However, there are clearly other benefits, as the salary increase is not exactly enormous.

◆ *More responsibility:* As you are promoted, you will have more and more responsibility: responsibility for increasing numbers of students and also for managing other members of staff.

◆ *Increased job satisfaction:* Additional responsibilities can lead to increased job satisfaction. The higher you go, the more you will be able to have an impact on the policies and philosophies of your school. You will probably feel that you have more of a say in the way things are run. This can be satisfying for the teacher who sees the negative results of ineffective management.

◆ *Developing your subject area:* If you become a head of department or faculty, or a subject co-ordinator, you can influence the procedures used within this area. You are also in a position to develop the role of the subject within the school. You will be employing, managing, developing and promoting other teachers and this can be very rewarding. You will have your own budget to manage for buying books, resources and so on.

◆ *‘Better’ relationships with the students:* As you go up the scale of status within a school, you receive a degree of instant respect from the students. This is obviously qualified by how they see you as a teacher, but students are clearly going to give more (or more instant) respect to their head of year than to a ‘normal’ teacher. Behaviour in your classes may improve as a result of promotion, although this is by no means automatic.

The disadvantages of promotion

You will also need to weigh up the negative aspects of a change in role before going for a more senior post. These disadvantages would include:

◆ *A changing, more stressful role:* In a promoted post you have to play
more of a managerial role in the school. Despite being trained to work in the classroom, you will have to do a very different job, requiring very different skills. You will have to manage teachers as well as students, a job that can be difficult and stressful.

- **A changing relationship with your colleagues:** Being promoted means a change in the way you work with and relate to other teachers. For instance, it can be hard to have to deal with a teacher who is not doing his or her job properly.

- **Working outside your area of expertise:** If you are promoted to a managerial post, you will have to learn to run a budget. In a pastoral role, you will move further away from your subject, perhaps one of the key motivating factors for your career choice.

- **Working with difficult students:** As a manager you are likely to spend more time dealing with the difficult students, whose problems (and the problems they create for their teachers) you must try to solve. You will have to interact with parents, again often the carers, of the problem students. One of the joys of teaching is interaction with bright, well-motivated students; this will decrease as you move up the scale in favour of disciplining those who have done something wrong.

- **A changing persona:** Taking on a role with more status will require you to adopt a different persona from that of the classroom teacher. A ‘normal’ teacher can, after a few years’ experience, get away with a more relaxed style with the students. This is not really an option if you are a pastoral manager or deputy head. You will have to be ‘in role’ at all times, dressing and behaving appropriately, inside and also outside of school.

- **Additional workload and responsibility:** As you advance up the scale you will have to attend after-school meetings that take up much of your free time at the end of each day. The increased administrative workload may mean that you have to sacrifice involvement in extra-curricular activities. And of course, the higher up the scale you go, the more likely it is that ‘the buck stops with you’ if something goes wrong.
Some teachers decide to stay at the same school for many years; others are keen to move on quickly. This might be because of a negative experience at a school, or because they are seeking promotion. If you get to the end of your NQT year and find yourself considering a move, think very carefully before going ahead. No matter how tough the school, life will always be a bit easier in your second year, because you know the children, the staff, the systems and the place. Perhaps you do need to make a fresh start in a new school, or perhaps you are thinking about leaving the profession. The information and ideas in this chapter will help you when you do decide to move on.

The right school?

Towards the end of your NQT year, you will have a fair idea about whether this is the right school for you. It is important to differentiate between the inevitable tiredness associated with the end of the year and the need to find a new school (or career). There is no point in going through the work of looking for another teaching job (you remember – the endless form filling and letters of application) if you are going to be moving from the proverbial frying pan into the fire.

You could look around your local area to see if there are any schools that interest you, and perhaps ask to visit some of them, particularly if there are jobs available. Remember, there is a lot more to choosing a school than considerations about how difficult the students are – the management will make a huge difference as well. Remember also that no school is perfect: decide whether the good points about your school outweigh the bad. Moving on after only one year is a big decision, especially as you will just be familiarizing yourself with the way things work.

Think also about how long you want to stay in one place: in the
teaching profession there is a strong temptation to stay at the same school for a long time – after a while it becomes easier not to move. You know the children, the staff, the systems; you may have gained promotion within your department or subject, but is it necessarily beneficial for you or for the school to stay on? To help you decide whether a move is a good idea, use the questions below to think about how well your school does:

Management
◆ Are the managers at your school approachable and flexible?
◆ Are they willing to support and develop the teachers?
◆ Do the managers respond to staff suggestions for change?
◆ Have they lost touch with what it means to be in a classroom?
◆ Do senior staff ever spend time in the classroom?
◆ Or do they hide in an office, handing down commands from above?
◆ How well do managers relate to the students?
◆ When there are behaviour issues, do you get the back-up you need?
◆ How have the managers supported you during your NQT year?
◆ Have they resolved any problems that you experienced?
◆ What kind of opportunities for personal development/promotion have you been given?

Staff
◆ Do the staff at your school relate well to each other?
◆ Are teachers and other staff supportive of each other’s ideas?
◆ How much cynicism and laziness have you seen?
◆ Is this about disillusionment with the job or with the school?
◆ Do staff tend to talk about the school in a positive or negative way?
◆ Do the different years/departments/areas within your school work together or in isolation?
◆ How well do you get on with the staff at your school?
◆ Do you respect their professionalism, or have at least a few things in common?
◆ Do you have good relationships with the support staff and other people who work at the school?
◆ How busy is the staffroom at breaks and lunchtimes?
◆ Do the staff ever socialize together?
Support systems
- Who can you turn to if you have a problem?
- Is your line manager an effective support?
- If not, is there someone else who can help you?
- Do the staff in your school support each other both inside and outside the classroom?
- Who supports the students in your school when they have problems?
- Is this done properly, or are issues swept under the carpet?
- Who supports any teachers when they are facing problems?
- Is this done effectively?
- Are staff ever undermined or bullied?

Your year group/department team
- How well does your year group leader or head of department suit the role?
- Do all members of your team pull their weight equally?
- Are you getting the opportunities you need for professional development?
- If you are aiming for promotion, are the opportunities available?
- Would you like to work in a smaller/larger team?

The students
- Do the children at your school show respect for each other?
- Is respect shown to teachers and support staff?
- How do students treat their environment?
- Is there a good mix of students who all get along with each other?
- What kind of children do you enjoy teaching?
- Do you relish the challenge of handling difficult behaviour?
- Would you prefer an ‘easier life’ at a private/grammar school (bear in mind the increased marking load and parental pressure)?
- Do you find the students interesting to teach?
- What are the links like between the school and the students’ homes?
- What kind of a ‘difference’ do you want to make to your children?

The curriculum
- Is your school innovative in the way it approaches the curriculum?
- Are managers up to date with the latest thoughts, ideas and innovations?
- Do you see yourself as overly bound by government guidelines and strategies?
How well is the curriculum organized?
Does your subject or age range get the resources it deserves?
In a secondary school, how are the subjects divided?
Are there faculties where several subjects are grouped together, or do the departments remain very much divided?

Administration, paperwork and meetings
Does your school make every effort to keep time-wasting admin to a minimum?
Are reports seen as a vital and informative method of communicating with the home, or are they an ineffective use of your time?
Are meetings run efficiently?
Are meetings interesting and a valuable part of school life?
Do you get the chance to contribute to the future direction of your school?
Is only a token gesture made towards genuine consultation with all the staff?

Buildings and facilities
Are the buildings and facilities of a good quality?
Is the fabric of the school well maintained?
Is there any graffiti – do the students care for their environment?
What are the students’ toilet facilities like (often a surprisingly strong indicator of how a school views its children)?
Is the space you teach in adequate for you?
Does your teaching space inspire and enthuse you?
Does your environment make you feel negative and depressed?
If you have any complaints about your environment are they taken seriously and dealt with quickly or not?

Promotion
Are you going to be looking for promotion in the near future?
Are you interested in a subject, pastoral or managerial route?
What opportunities are available in your school?
Do your managers see your professional development as important?
How are they going about promoting this aspect of your role?

Extra-curricular activities
Are there a variety of extra-curricular activities at your school?
Are these activities well supported by staff and students?

Do a variety of staff get involved, or is the job of running them left to the more enthusiastic teachers?

Are parents keen to get involved with the day-to-day life of the school?

Do parents help out with after-school clubs?

References

When you apply for your next job the school will usually ask for two referees, probably your head and your head of department or line manager. If you are efficient and get on well with them, you should have no problem getting good references. Make sure they have a list of all those ‘extras’ you have been involved with, such as extra-curricular activities. Remember to tell your referees that you have applied for a new job before they receive a request for references. It is only polite and it will improve the chances of your receiving a good reference. Make sure that they also have some information about the type of job you are applying for, so they can adapt their reference to suit.

Applying for jobs

As the year passes, you will take part in many different aspects of school life; make sure that you keep a note of all the ‘little extras’ that you contribute to your school. When you come to write the letter of application for your next job, it’s a pain to realize that you cannot remember which working parties you were on, how many plays or concerts you helped with and so on. Write everything down as you go along – you might use a little notebook especially for this purpose. Schools want to know that you are an enthusiastic teacher who gets involved with all aspects of the life of the school. Demonstrate in your letter of application how you have done this at your current school.

Even if you are not desperate to move, bear in mind that if you get an interview for a job it will be good experience (and will get you a day out of school). Going for an interview will also demonstrate to your managers that you are looking for further development in your career. If you are an asset to the teaching staff at your school, they may decide that they do not want to lose you, and consequently try to offer you some sort of internal promotion or development. Be realistic about the
jobs that you apply for – there is not usually much point in applying for a job that is more than two or three salary points above yours.

Is teaching the job for you?

After training as a teacher, there is a temptation to remain in the profession, even if you are not sure that it is the right job for you. At the end of your first year you will have gained some experience and can make a more rational judgement about your choice of career. Do bear in mind, however, that teaching becomes easier the more experienced you become – the first year or two is always hard, no matter how talented a teacher you are.

Think very carefully if you are having doubts about teaching, preferably during your lovely, long holidays. Perhaps have a chat with an experienced member of staff who you can trust to be discreet. Remember also that you may just be in the wrong school or teaching the wrong type of students for you. The following lists give some of the plus and minus points of teaching as a profession and may be helpful to you in deciding whether it is or is not the career for you.

The rewards

◆ You are your own boss – to an extent you teach what you want.
◆ You are working with the subject that you enjoy, day after day.
◆ You are working with children, day after day.
◆ There is good job security and pay rises are automatic.
◆ The job is as creative as you want to make it.
◆ The job is as big as you want to make it.
◆ The job is never boring.
◆ You can make a real difference to your children.
◆ You can form lasting relationships with students and staff.
◆ If you are good, your children will always remember you.
◆ There is excellent variety from day to day.
◆ You can gain valuable experience of a variety of tasks and situations.
◆ The actual school day is very short.
◆ It is a good job to combine with having a family.
◆ The teachers' pension is a good perk.
◆ The holidays really are very good indeed – this is a big perk. (If you’re not convinced about this, just ask any office worker on 20 days’ annual leave.)
The negative aspects
◆ The job is physically and emotionally tiring.
◆ The job expands to meet the extent of your dedication.
◆ You will encounter difficult and even disturbed children (and parents).
◆ You may be put at risk of injury from these people.
◆ The nature of the job can lead to cynicism.
◆ The salary will never be brilliant and only rises fairly slowly.
◆ Your friends in most other professions will rapidly start earning more than you.
◆ There is a lack of genuine promotion prospects for many teachers.
◆ Ironically, experienced teachers become too expensive for some schools.
◆ You will often have to work late, in your own time, to do a good job.
◆ You may be too tired to appreciate those lovely long holidays.

Leaving
So, you made the decision to go, and now the moment has come. You’ve told your children and been faced with reactions from ‘Great!’ to ‘Please, Miss/Sir, don’t leave’. Leaving is a double-edged sword – on the one hand you will find out how your students really feel about you (hopefully good), on the other hand you will be leaving behind colleagues and children whom you genuinely care about, having worked with them closely for a long time. You may also feel guilty about leaving some secondary level classes halfway through a course. Don’t – if you use this as a reason not to leave, you will never get out of your first school.

On your last day you will hopefully receive lots of cards and presents. You may have to give a leaving speech, but remember one thing before you list all the grievances you have about the school or the head – you may need a reference from him or her in the future.

Finally, I would like to wish you luck in the future, wherever, whatever and whomever you teach. As I said at the start of this book, you have made a wonderful choice of career. Try to look on the difficult times as a challenge and enjoy those indescribable moments of joy when you make a new discovery with a class, help a weak student to succeed or when your children tell you just what you mean to them. It is a rare and very special job that can offer you all this and more.
## Appendix One
### Teaching Jargon: A User’s Guide

Since you’re becoming a teacher, I’d like to welcome you to the world of acronyms, abbreviations and complicated-sounding jargon. Without this guide, a lot of the profession will be indecipherable to the ‘normal’ person (and perhaps that is partly the idea). This page gives you a brief rundown of some of the key jargon and terminology that you will run into in your first year as a teacher.

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<td>AS level</td>
<td>Advanced Subsidiary level</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADD</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>AfL</td>
<td>Assessment for Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>AR&amp;R</td>
<td>Assessment, Recording &amp; Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATL</td>
<td>Association of Teachers and Lecturers</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
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<td>BT</td>
<td>Beginning Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDG</td>
<td>Curriculum Development Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPO</td>
<td>Child Protection Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCFS</td>
<td>Department for Children, Families and Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBD</td>
<td>Emotional/Behavioural Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>EdPsyc</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPD</td>
<td>Early Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>EWO</td>
<td>Education Welfare Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>General Certificate of Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNVQ</td>
<td>General National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRTP</td>
<td>Graduate and Registered Teacher Programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTC</td>
<td>General Teaching Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Graduate Teacher Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTTR</td>
<td>Graduate Teacher Training Registry</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMCI</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMI</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSET</td>
<td>In Service Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITT</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>Key Stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSA</td>
<td>Learning Support Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFL</td>
<td>Modern Foreign Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASUWT</td>
<td>National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>National Literacy Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>National Numeracy Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQT</td>
<td>Newly Qualified Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUT</td>
<td>National Union of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAT</td>
<td>Professional Association of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>Post Graduate Certificate in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSHE</td>
<td>Personal, Social and Health Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent–Teacher Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTS</td>
<td>Qualified Teacher Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTP</td>
<td>Registered Teacher Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Statutory Assessment Tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCITT</td>
<td>School-Centred Initial Teacher Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLT</td>
<td>Senior Leadership Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SpLD</td>
<td>Specific Learning Difficulty</td>
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<tr>
<td>STRB</td>
<td>School Teachers’ Review Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>TES</td>
<td>The Times Educational Supplement</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTA</td>
<td>Teacher Training Agency</td>
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Appendix Two
Internet Links


www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/nationalagreement.aspx – Information about the National Agreement.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/professionaldevelopment/ – Information about professional development opportunities.


www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/ – A great site run by a junior school in Kent, which has loads of ideas and resources.

www.tes.co.uk – Forums for discussing all aspects of teaching – a great place for online networking and finding ideas.
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