

The edcentral alternative student teacher manual



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A message from our founder

"Just when you think you know something, you have to look at in another way. Even though it may seem silly or wrong, you must try."

**John Keating,
Dead Poets Society**



**Nicola McEwan,
director of
teacher training,
University of
Buckingham**

When you were wondering about becoming a teacher, you may have thought about the famous teaching characters from films. Is that what it will be like? Will you inspire greatness and change lives?

There will probably be less glamour and your story is unlikely to be made into a movie, but you will undoubtedly be doing a great service to society and to young people, in one of the best professions in the world.

Getting through your first year, however, is no mean feat and there will be lots of questions. What on earth do those acronyms mean? What's the best way to get to know other staff? How can you make sure you get enough sleep?

This alternative guide will tell you the things you need to know that aren't covered in the

curriculum or PGCE handbook. These are the unspoken rules.

I remember, as an NQT, arriving at school at 8am for an 8.30am start, thinking that was plenty of time to unpack, copy things for period 1 and empty my pigeon hole. I had no idea there would be a queue for the photocopier. When you're new, it is all about earlier starts and later finishes than your timetable would lead you to believe.

It is about learning how to have professional dialogues and not talk about people in the staffroom without realising that they are standing nearby (this also happened to me as an NQT).

It's about managing stressful situations, with pupils and colleagues – I once worked with a HOD who threw a handbag at someone in the staffroom. I cried a lot. If this guide can help prevent a few tears or help you keep your professional cool when your temper is flaring, that has to be good.

There is a lot to learn and not all of it is academic. The tips in this guide will save you valuable time so you can have a life, see friends and family, and survive – just like Gloria Gaynor taught us.



**Clock on
to time
management**

Let's start with the bad news: now that you're a teacher, your to-do list will never be complete. Ever. Part of the deal with having a job that's so important is that you will also have so many demands on your time that working 24/7 wouldn't be enough. It's imperative, then, that you master the art of effective time management early. You can only work a certain number of hours per day (and that should very much not be 24/7).

Effective prioritisation is the answer, says psychologist Bradley Busch – and that starts with a simple question about the task that you're facing: is it important, or urgent?

"You need to be aware of the difference between the two; people tend to get them confused," he explains. "If you only ever do the stuff that's urgent, you'll constantly be firefighting and neglecting the stuff that's important."

Meetings are a perfect example of this. When you're suddenly asked to attend one that starts in 10 minutes, it will naturally feel like an urgent request, but you should ask yourself whether it is actually important for you to be there. If not, you can politely decline and explain that you are working on other important tasks.

"You will get better with experience at differentiating between the two, but it can be a challenge for student teachers and NQTs who don't have that experience to draw upon," Busch continues. "It takes quite a bit of self-confidence to say what is important. You have to remember that you only have a finite amount of time and you need to have the ability to say no."

But how can you work out if a task is important? Easy, Busch says, you just need to think about how much it feeds into your ultimate goal. Your aim as a teacher is to ensure your students learn as much as possible. This means all tasks should be weighed up against how much they improve students' knowledge and understanding of your subject – if something isn't going to

help your pupils to make progress, it should be lower on your list of priorities.

Take lesson planning, for example. It can be tempting to spend hours and hours creating gorgeous resources and fancy slides, but how much impact will aesthetics really have on the learning? Give this some consideration (and then step away from the 'effects' menu on Powerpoint).

Busch says it's even worth weighing up marking in the same way. "There's a lot of debate about this," he says. "Look at how much time you spend on it and how much impact it has. If pupils aren't reading or properly engaging with your comments, then there's probably a more effective way to use your time. It's linked to the concept of opportunity cost – for each thing you do, there's something else you can't do."

Productivity and avoiding procrastination are also big concerns – and Busch says there's a (seemingly counter-intuitive) trick that can help you to complete your work more quickly and effectively. It's a simple idea: start more than one task at a time, and leave one unfinished while you complete the other. It comes down to something called the Zeigarnik effect, he explains. Our brain has a tendency to fixate on unfinished tasks – you will stay subconsciously 'switched on' to that task until it is complete and you can forget about it.

This means that, rather than putting off tasks until you have a big enough chunk of time to properly complete them, just getting started, even briefly, is a more sensible approach. "Even if you just do it for 10 minutes, that is half the battle," Busch explains. "Our brain hates uncompleted tasks, so once you've started, the effect kicks in and you'll want to see it through."

This is not to be confused with flitting between two (or more) tasks at once, though – that is the way to mental overload. Having started a few tasks is good, but when it comes to actually sitting



down and getting on with work, you need to focus on one thing at a time – and that means cutting out all distractions. Shut down unnecessary tabs on your computer (especially social media), put your phone out of sight and set yourself a clear schedule – a lot of people favour the Pomodoro Technique, in which you work for 25 minutes and then give yourself a five-minute break.

The most important aspect of time management, Busch says, is making sure that you are putting your own wellbeing above everything else – for your sake and your pupils'. If you're exhausting yourself in a mad dash to try and get everything done, you are going to become less effective as the effort takes its toll.

"When you're stressed, your focus is narrowed," he explains. "It's like having blinkers on. You're less likely to explore the range of options and instead get fixated on a singular idea – often the first one you think of because there's a sense of urgency

and a sense that you don't have time to consider the others.

"This can also have a negative impact on your sleep, your decision-making and your concentration. If you're too stressed you're more likely to interpret things negatively or catastrophise."

Realistically, in any school, you are going to experience some stress. But, he adds, not all stress is bad – in fact, a little bit can actually be beneficial to your performance by spurring you to action. Busch describes it as the 'Goldilocks effect' – finding the sweet spot between feeling nonplussed and completely overwhelmed.

"If you don't have any stress at all, that tends to mean you don't care, which doesn't help," he says. "But when you have too much stress, that is damaging. Ultimately, you need to find the level that works for you and operate there. Make looking after yourself your top priority."



**The science of
sleep and why
it should be
your priority**

We all know the stereotype of the coffee-guzzling, yawn-suppressing teacher – but that image has its roots in the very real stress that teacher training's early starts and long hours can put on your body. So how can you look after yourself as you adjust to the demanding schedule of school life? We spoke to sleep expert Dr Frances Le Cornu Knight from UCL to get the lowdown on getting enough rest.

New teachers can often find themselves sacrificing sleep to get work done. What are the dangers of this?

Sleep is fundamental to good health, both physically and mentally. People who are sleep deprived will have less energy, be less able to maintain optimal physical fitness, have more difficulty focusing on tasks and will be less able to turn new information learned during the day into stable and long-lasting memories, which is vital for a new teacher.

Poor sleep is also associated with unhealthy lifestyle habits. For example, people who sleep badly often crave a high-carbohydrate diet, and as a result are likely to put on weight. They are also more likely to get trapped in a high caffeine cycle (they feel tired, so they drink caffeine throughout the day, so they are then unable to sleep at night and so on). Poor sleep is also associated with reduced ability to cope with stressful events, and increased tendency towards depression and anxiety.

Teachers reportedly get about six hours' sleep a night on average – is this enough?

It is recommended that adults need an average of eight hours sleep, but there

is considerable individual variation in this; for some people six hours will be sufficient, while others may need 10 hours. Interestingly, neuroscientist Russell Foster suggests that if you are relying on an alarm clock to wake you then you are not getting enough sleep (although I'm not sure I'd ever wake up if I used this approach).

What can new teachers do to get into the right sort of sleep schedule?

Our bodies run on a diurnal body clock, meaning in a 24-hour period we have one block of sleep and one block of waking. This body clock is naturally trained by sunlight, but in the modern world it is often retrained to suit the routine of our lifestyle. So if as a new teacher, you are suddenly finding you have to get up at 6.30am, you need to figure out how much sleep you need, and adjust your routine. Let's say you need the typical eight hours, so you need to be asleep by 10.30pm, and should begin your bedtime routine at around 9.30pm. That doesn't mean getting into bed at 9.30pm, but beginning the process of relaxing (for example, finishing marking and turning off stimulating media).

What impact can stress have on sleep?

There is an established link between high stress levels and poor sleep and, like the caffeine cycle, this is probably cyclical. The hormone cortisol (nicknamed the stress hormone) is also the hormone responsible for waking us up in the morning – so having high levels of this hormone circulating in your body before bedtime can be incredibly disruptive. And then, in turn, evidence suggests that poor sleep has the effect of us perceiving stressful events as more stressful. It is difficult to avoid stress, especially when starting a new job, but you



can try to be mindful of how you deal with your new venture.

Make time to do whatever it is you find most effective at de-stressing, whether that's exercising, chatting with friends or taking a long bath. These things may appear to be indulgent when you have a busy schedule, but they will help you cope with stress in the long run. And finally, prioritise sleep. If you are getting enough sleep, you will be less likely to experience as high levels of stress.

What can people do to stop their minds racing with work thoughts before sleep?

A lot of people find mindfulness apps helpful – they talk you through a step-by-step processes of clearing your mind ready for sleep. I have tried them

and I find that I'm often asleep before the tutorial finishes. Making time to do something relaxing before getting into bed will also help. Some people find it useful to write down a list of things that are playing on their mind, as this helps externalise them before going to bed. And in terms of breaking the sleep stress cycle, make sure you are finishing work-related tasks within an hour of your bedtime.

Is it possible to catch up on sleep in the holidays?

This is an interesting question. In some senses we can catch up on some sleep in the holidays, and at the weekends. But your body craves routine, and getting in and out of different routines confuses it, so it's far better to prioritise sleep in your daily life and establish a consistent daily routine, rather than relying on holidays to play catch up.

**Nobody's perfect
– how to avoid
putting too
much pressure
on yourself**



It's the joke answer to that difficult job interview question: "My biggest weakness is that I'm a perfectionist." But the reality of perfectionism isn't funny, with massive stress caused by unrealistic expectations.

When you start any new job – but particularly one as all-encompassing as teaching – it is natural to want to hold yourself to a high standard and make your mark. However, striving for an unattainable level of performance when you're just starting out will be of no benefit to you or your students.

Perfectionist traits can have their roots in many places, says psychologist Bradley Busch, particularly your childhood. And they can be further triggered or manipulated by the environment you're in. Ultimately, he explains, the problem boils down to having an unhealthy relationship with mistakes and setbacks, leading to a fear of failure.

"It's good to have high standards, and to want to be as good as you can be and improve," he says. "But that is quite a separate thing from perfectionism, which is often about never making mistakes. It's an important distinction to make."

It's also the opposite of what your teacher training is about. The whole purpose of this period is for you to learn – and that means making mistakes. A lot of them. You are discovering how to do a job that you simply don't know how to do yet, and mucking up is the fastest way to doing it better.

"You need to reframe the way you view setbacks," Busch continues. "When you make mistakes, you need to see them as learning opportunities. You haven't had lots of experience as a teacher yet, so it's unrealistic to expect that you'll be as good now as you will be in 10 years' time. You will make mistakes because you just don't have that experience and that knowledge base yet."

One of the most stress-inducing parts of

training is lesson observations. You'll be observed frequently, by other teachers, by fellow trainees, by your lecturers from university and others – and there will be times when your observations do not go to plan. It is essential, then, to consider these moments in the right way.

"A lot of people get very, very stressed about observations, especially if they're graded, which we know from research is a terrible idea," Busch says. "They can feel that they are being judged as a person, rather than getting feedback on the task. But if you can just see it as a conversation about the task at hand, with someone who is wiser and wants to help you, all of a sudden that feedback isn't perceived as criticism and judgment, but a way of getting better."

If you're not already familiar with Carol Dweck's theory of growth mindset, you definitely will be soon, as it has reached ubiquity in education circles. In short, it proposes that the best way to make progress is to believe that you can improve, rather than thinking your ability is fixed. Teachers are encouraged to nurture this mindset in their pupils, but it's just as important for those who are starting out in education too. A rubbish lesson does not mean that you're rubbish – you just have some things to work on. Dweck's book *Mindset* is a good place to start, and Busch also recommends US teacher Ron Berger's work **An Ethic of Excellence** for advice that is applicable both to students and new teaching staff.

Just as crucial, he says, is learning not to be worried about other people's progress or opinions about your development. You will improve at your own pace and that pace is the one that's right for you.

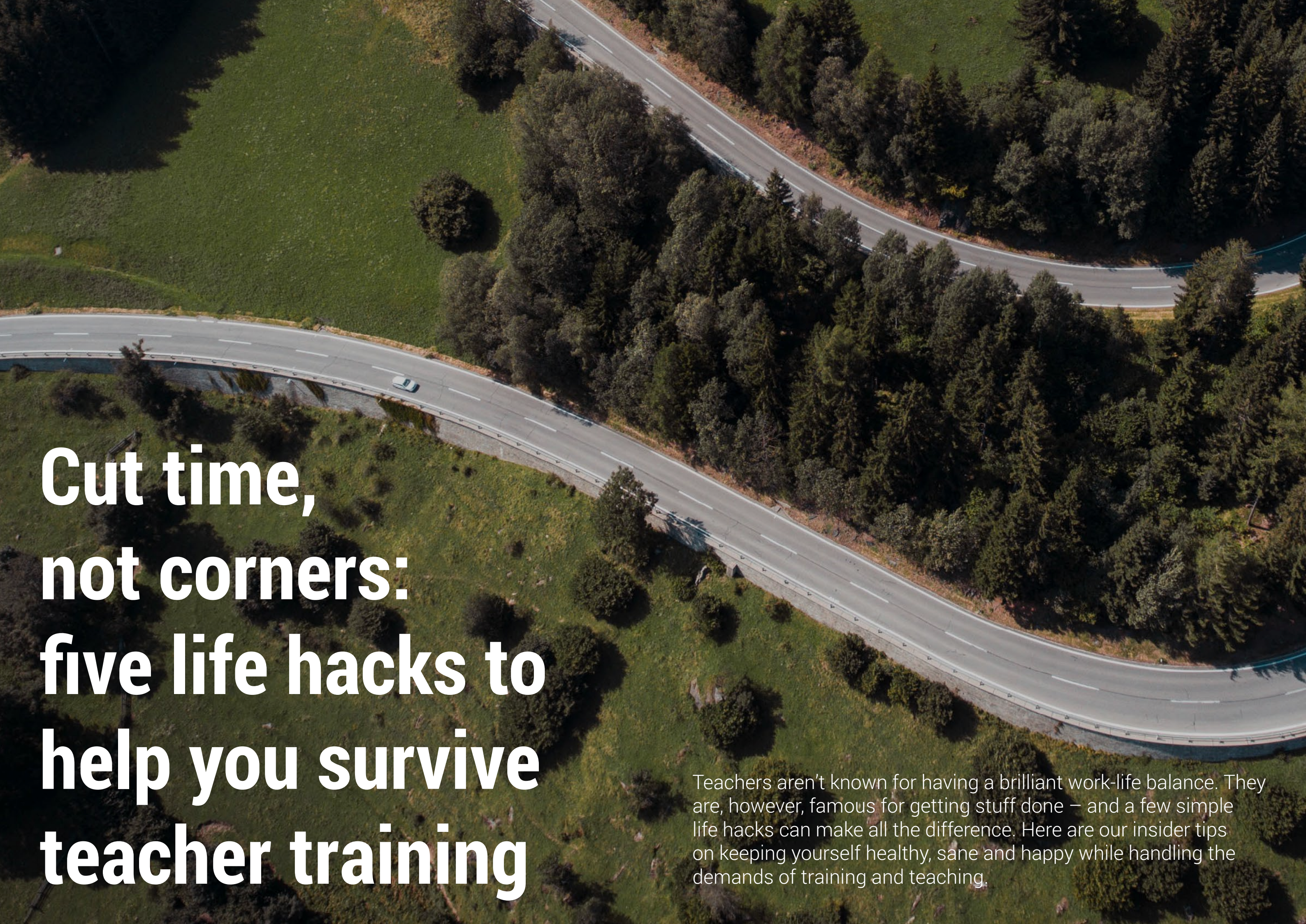
"It's better to focus on getting good than worrying about whether people think you're good," continues Busch. "I have conducted research into fear of failure and if you look into any area – be it sport, school, business – the number one fear that people have



following a failure is embarrassment."

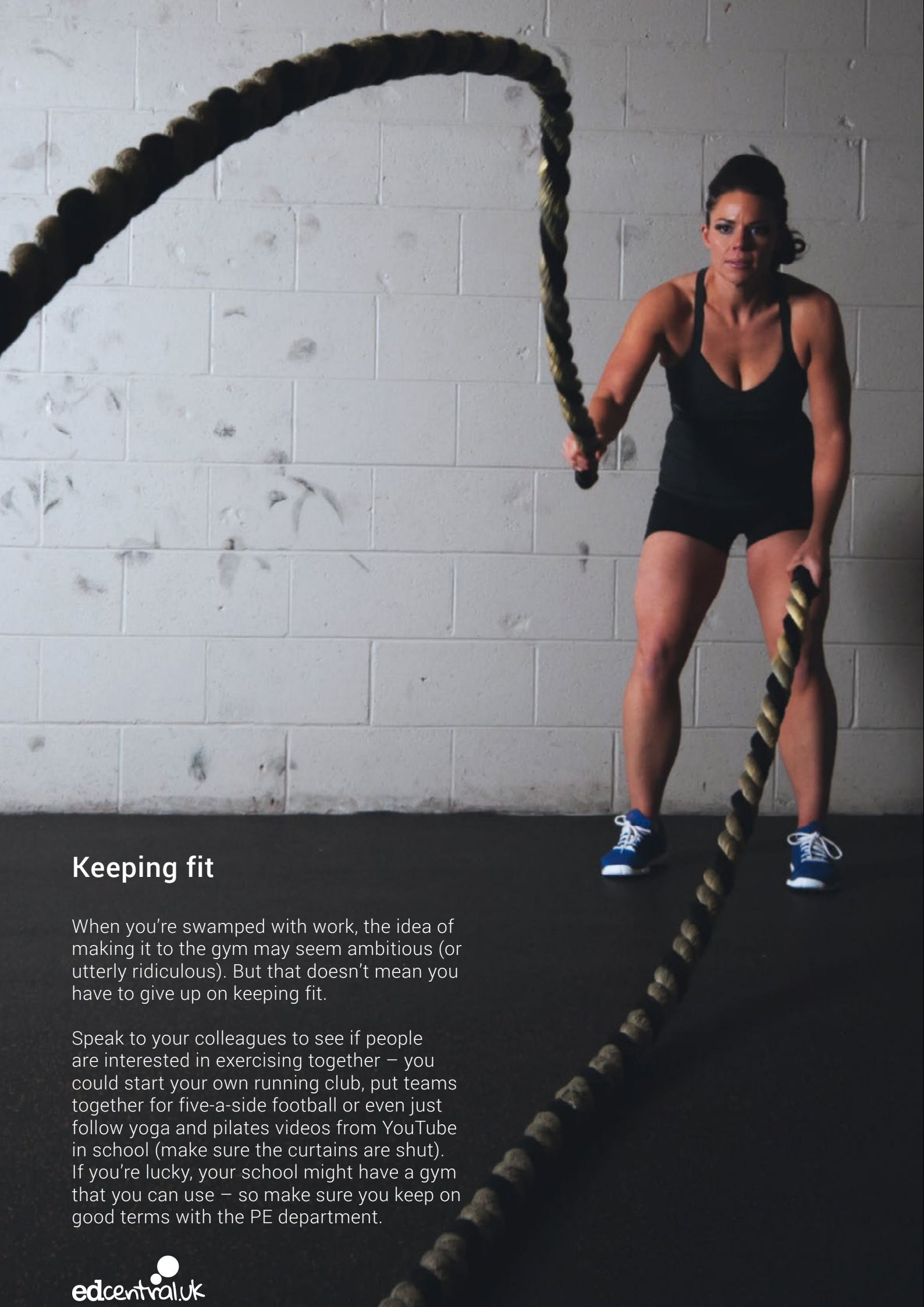
"But you have permission to do that because you are learning. You don't want to be making those same mistakes in five years' time, so you have permission to ask

questions and not be perfect right now. Every teacher has been there and done it themselves and they know that they didn't know everything at the start. It is completely OK that you're not the finished article yet, so take the pressure off yourself."



Cut time, not corners: five life hacks to help you survive teacher training

Teachers aren't known for having a brilliant work-life balance. They are, however, famous for getting stuff done – and a few simple life hacks can make all the difference. Here are our insider tips on keeping yourself healthy, sane and happy while handling the demands of training and teaching.



Keeping fit

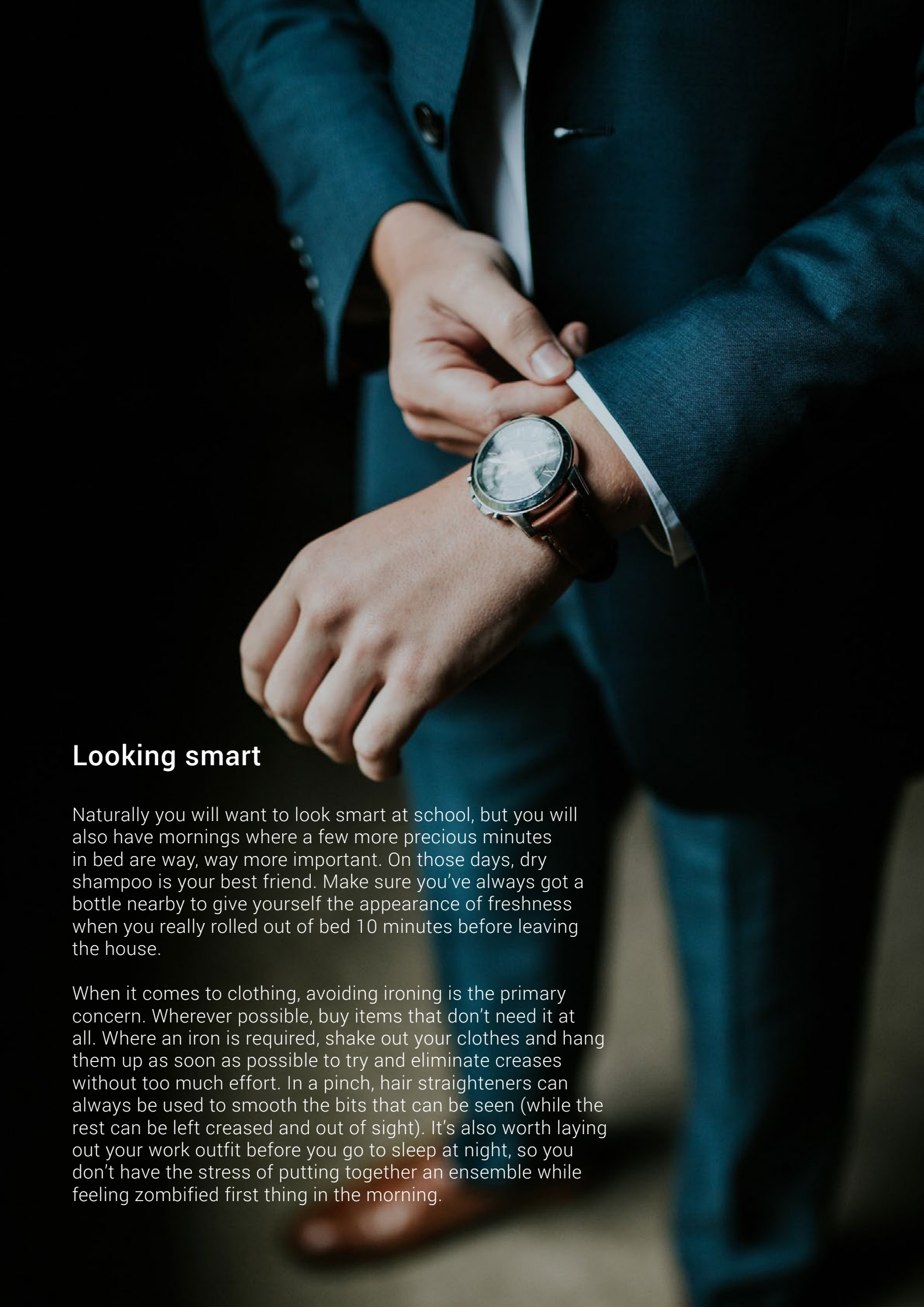
When you're swamped with work, the idea of making it to the gym may seem ambitious (or utterly ridiculous). But that doesn't mean you have to give up on keeping fit.


Speak to your colleagues to see if people are interested in exercising together – you could start your own running club, put teams together for five-a-side football or even just follow yoga and pilates videos from YouTube in school (make sure the curtains are shut). If you're lucky, your school might have a gym that you can use – so make sure you keep on good terms with the PE department.

Looking smart

Naturally you will want to look smart at school, but you will also have mornings where a few more precious minutes in bed are way, way more important. On those days, dry shampoo is your best friend. Make sure you've always got a bottle nearby to give yourself the appearance of freshness when you really rolled out of bed 10 minutes before leaving the house.

When it comes to clothing, avoiding ironing is the primary concern. Wherever possible, buy items that don't need it at all. Where an iron is required, shake out your clothes and hang them up as soon as possible to try and eliminate creases without too much effort. In a pinch, hair straighteners can always be used to smooth the bits that can be seen (while the rest can be left creased and out of sight). It's also worth laying out your work outfit before you go to sleep at night, so you don't have the stress of putting together an ensemble while feeling zombified first thing in the morning.






Staying nourished

You're going to need lots of energy, but you're not going to have much time to shop and prepare elaborate meals. That doesn't mean you need to go down the junk food path.

For a quick, nutritious breakfast – that you can consume on the way to work (if needs be) – get a load of fruit and oats and create your own smoothies (extra points for adding spinach, kale and other health-boosting greenery).

You can look after lunch for the week by taking time on Sunday night to create a dish that can be portioned out for the week – search online for 'batch meals' for ideas like healthy salads, pitta pockets and curries. Avoid unhealthy snacking during the day by keeping a stash of fruit and nuts in your desk.

For your evening meals, make sure you plan ahead for the week when you go to the supermarket, so you don't find yourself arriving home hungry to an empty fridge. If you live with other people, try creating a cooking schedule to ensure there's a meal available each night, or get a slow cooker which will allow you to get home to a cooked dinner with minimal effort. Alternatively, recipe boxes are becoming increasingly popular; enabling you to create proper interesting meals with the pre-portioned ingredients coming in from around £4 per meal.



Switching on (and off)

Technology can be a blessing and a curse when it comes to work-life balance. An omnipresent email inbox is a definite no-no, so set a time each day to turn off. Your reply will almost definitely be better in the morning anyway.

Apps can be helpful, however. Try a time tracker to analyse how you are spending your working hours – if one element of the job is disproportionately taking up your time, you can address it. If you're prone to procrastination, there are lots of programmes available that can block you from certain sites, or even the internet, for a pre-determined period. And while you're getting used to your new schedule, try a sleep cycle app to ensure you're getting enough rest.



Stay social

Your social life is going to take a hit as you become a teacher, so make sure your friends understand it's not them, it's you. Let them know you are likely to be tired, hitting bed around 10pm and maybe even feeling ill towards the end of term, so you might not be about as much as you'd like (but will make it up to them in the holidays).

When you do see friends, do your very, very, very best not to talk about work too much – the little world you're now a part of will be fascinating to you, but far less so to others. And when you see other teachers, try as hard as you can not to fall into comparing, contrasting and competing about your schools. Rest assured, you will almost definitely fail at this.



**Making a
connection: how
to form good
working
relationships in
your new school**

If there's one thing that schools have plenty of, it's people. There aren't many jobs that require you to interact with so many people every day; in addition your pupils, there are parents, members of staff in your department, those in other subject areas and the wider school community.

It can be tempting to stay in your classroom and soldier on when you're new, busy and unsure, and some student and new teachers (understandably) find it difficult to approach experienced staff who already have a lot to deal with. But forming links and relationships with other people is crucial to making the most of your training, and will give you a place to turn when things get difficult.

We spoke to two school leaders – Emma McLaughlin, headteacher at Powell Corderoy School in Surrey, and Benjamin Ward, assistant vice principal for teaching and learning at Manchester Enterprise Academy – for their top tips on handling the interpersonal demands of the role.

Be polite and positive when dealing with parents



Ben: Phone calls home, both positive and negative, are vital in the early weeks.

There will be some parents you'll call more frequently over the year; you probably won't know

who they are at the start,

but it's worth investing in building good relationships with them all from the outset.

Be polite, supportive and encouraging, even when the phone call is about something negative. Find positives to praise and keep it factual – stick to what happened and what the result was. Stay away from generalisations or any statements you

can't back up. If a parent's response is inappropriate, politely and professionally challenge it, and if it continues, explain you are ending the call and pass it to your head of department (these situations are rare, but they do happen).

Invest time in forming relationships with colleagues early

Ben: It's all about building relationships with everyone – there's the old cliché about the importance of getting along with the cleaners, site team, dinner ladies and so on. You should get to know the staff in your department and those elsewhere – they may be based in other workrooms so there won't always be naturally occurring interactions. It's always helpful to know senior leaders with offices near your teaching space, as well as the other NQTs and developing teachers.

All of these should be conscious decisions – seek out opportunities to invest time in these relationships. Be available, friendly, helpful and positive; the more you invest in these relationships the more you have “in the bank” when you need advice, support, time or help.



Emma: Be open and personable, and ask questions. People will want to get to know you and feel that you are interested in the

school. Talk to people at

break, lunchtimes and after school. Find out about your colleagues and the families you work with. Remain professional in your own conduct of course, but don't be afraid to work on becoming part of the school community – as a person as well as an employee.



Don't be arrogant

Emma: As you get to know the school, respect the experience others have. New ideas and enthusiasm are great, but try not to be so keen to make your mark that you overlook the marks made by others: you may be able to learn from them.

Ben: Make sure you're humble and teachable – ask questions and listen to the answers. If you're given advice that you're not sure you agree with, accept it with professionalism and good grace, and go away and think about it.

There's nothing wrong with asking questions to better understand the perspective of someone whose views you value, but there's nothing to be gained by shunning their advice – they probably won't offer it again if it's not valued.

Find out who does what

Emma: Take the time to find out who to go to for what advice, and be mindful that mentoring is an added job to someone's (busy) workload. One person doesn't need to field all of your questions – you

can be more efficient in this regard by understanding the different roles and responsibilities people have, whether it's admin, being a subject leader, a team leader, or a business manager. Go to the right people for the right information and be considerate of their workload by arranging a time to speak if it's more than a quick question.

Steer clear of gossip and negativity

Ben: Be professional and avoid talking about people behind their backs – you wouldn't want people to do it to you, and when you engage in such behaviour, or even just listen to it, you're condoning it. In fact, try to avoid being sucked into complaining and negativity in general.

Remember that you won't get on with everyone; you'll have people who become good friends, people who become trusted advisors and mentors (official or unofficial), and people who are just colleagues, with whom your relationship is just professional. Be polite, helpful and professional, and don't feel the need to force anything more – ultimately, just be yourself.



**How not to be
annoying when
you're observing
lessons**

There are certain things that you will be doing a lot of as a teacher: planning, marking, telling pupils to tuck their shirts in. Then there are the things you will want to do a lot more of: sleeping, extracurricular adventures, sleeping.

Observations, however, absolutely need to be in the first group – they may not be scheduled into your timetable, but they are crucial to your development as a teacher. It's worth blocking out some time every week to make sure you're getting out and seeing how others do it.

But when you get there, simply sitting at the back of another teacher's classroom and watching the action isn't enough. You need to be active, engaged and directing your attention to specific areas that you can reflect on later.

We spoke to two observation experts – Elizabeth Aubrey, education writer and former specialist leader in education, and John Winwood, assistant headteacher at Turves Green Boys School in Birmingham – to get their advice on getting the most out of your visits.

Set a clear purpose beforehand



John: Meet up with the teacher beforehand and be specific about what you're looking for. Earlier in my career, I used to turn up to lessons, have a look and then get a bit bored about five minutes in as I wasn't sure what I was looking for.

Ideally you should bring some criteria to make your judgments against. You might be looking at assessment, for example, but without really knowing what good-quality

assessment looks like. At my school, we give NQTs our criteria (based on Ofsted criteria) and prepare them beforehand, so that when they are observing they can look to see what is taking place and make a judgment on the quality of the learning.

Don't be a wallflower

John: I always want an observer to interact – there's nothing worse than someone who comes in and just sits in the back corner. If an NQT is going to come in, I want them to learn. What I do now is go over to them and then take them to specific things in the room – so if they're looking at a certain area, I'll explain to them how I've done it (and highlight things I've done wrong). That's why it's so important to have that conversation before the lesson.

Observe with another member of staff if possible

John: We're introducing lesson study triads at my school, where you work in threes and coach at the same time. We encourage people to go into lessons in pairs – a more experienced member of staff accompanies a less experienced one, so they can train them how to look for specific things and become more skilled in observing.

Do your research



Elizabeth: Make sure you know a bit about the class you're observing in advance – print off data sheets and ask the teacher for a seating plan. You'll get so much more out of the lesson that way. It's also helpful as an observer to find out where the teacher is up to in the current scheme of work so you can understand



the lesson in context. Observing a lesson without that context can sometimes lead to a lot of post-observation talk about why the students were doing a particular activity, whereas when you know about the previous learning, things are clearer.

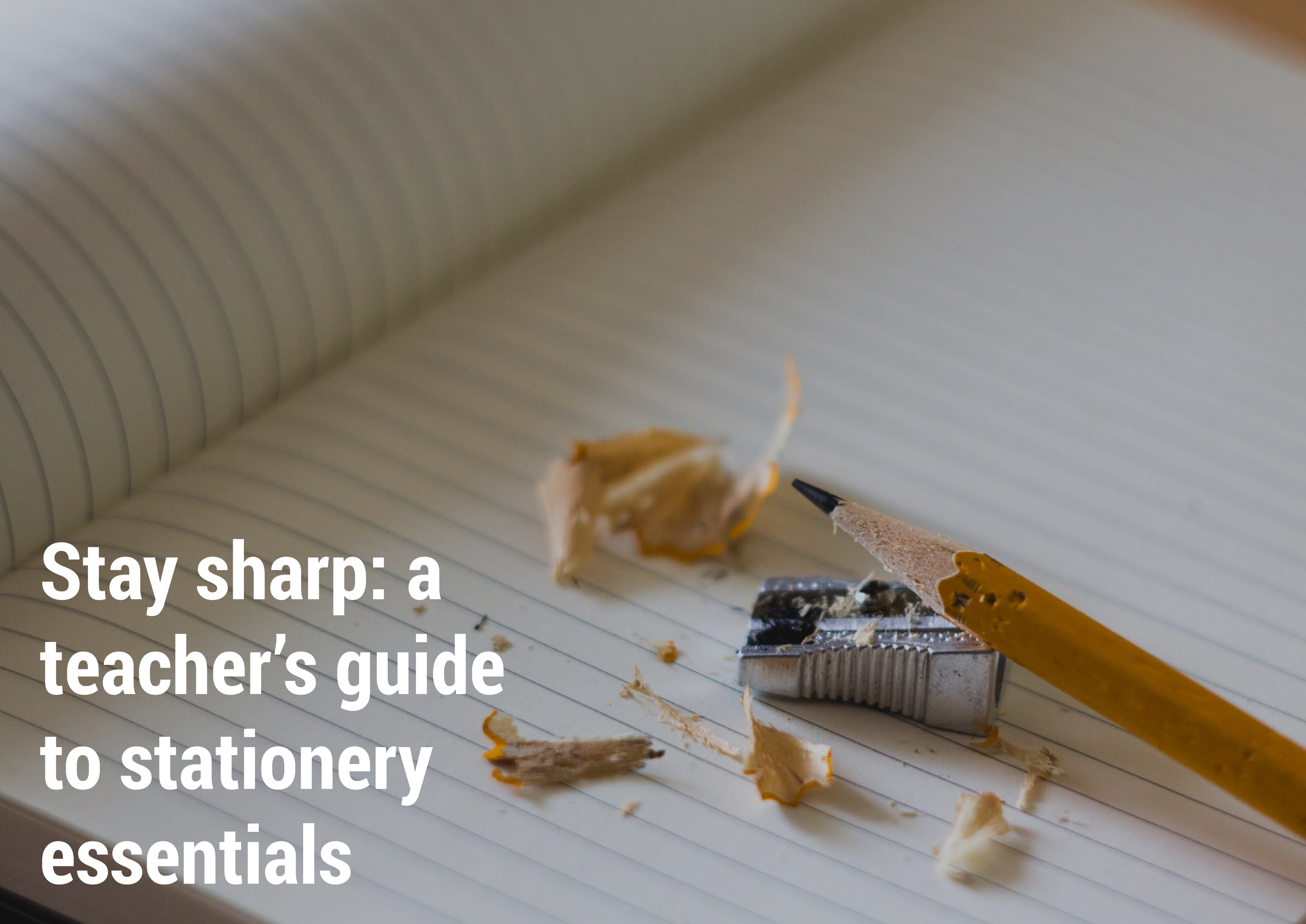
Get into different departments

Elizabeth: Don't feel you have to stick to your subject area. Go out and observe colleagues from lots of different subjects. I once observed a PE class doing football literacy and it completely changed my own approach to teaching a particular part of the English syllabus. Don't underestimate what you can learn from areas.

Have a proper debrief

Elizabeth: When I've observed someone, I always begin by asking them how they felt it went, as this helps to foster a discussion. It can be helpful to separate the conversation into different areas, such as engagement and challenge; expectations; and progress.

This can help structure the discussion and make it purposeful. The very best feedback is always a discussion between professionals regarding pedagogy. And don't be shy about sharing your own experiences (positive and negative) – shared ideas help us all to become better and more productive teachers.



Stay sharp: a teacher's guide to stationery essentials

Here are our tips for getting the most from your classroom accessories

You will quickly learn the importance (and associated stress) of having an adequate supply of whiteboard markers. You can ensure that yours are always nearby by attaching a strip of velcro to the side of your whiteboard, and a little to each pen for safe storage. (An added tip: if you keep your pens facing downwards, the ink will last longer.) You can also glue a little craft pom pom to the end of them to create handy erasers and, let's be honest, a way to identify them in case any sticky-fingered colleagues come creeping.

There will be a lot of other items that you'll want to keep close to hand – spare pens, paper, rulers, calculators and so on. If your room isn't overly blessed with storage (or you'd just rather have everything nearby than in a drawer) invest in a cheap hanging shoe rack that you can repurpose as a handy storage unit.



An alternative for storing pens, pencils and rulers is to use old jam jars, which you can decorate and label if you're feeling crafty. This means you can keep everything separate and tidy, and save yourself valuable time scrabbling around in a pencil case.

There are plenty of other kitchen items that can be given a new lease of life in your classroom – lining a baking tray with colourful paper makes



a great place for pupils to submit their homework.



An old-fashioned kitchen timer can also be put to use in helping students manage their time in class. There are plenty of online timers available for this too, but a low-cost ticking version will do the job just as well.

Individual whiteboards can be incredibly useful learning tools, but if your department doesn't have enough for each student, you can easily make your own. Old DVD cases with white paper underneath the cover work well, as do plastic plates.



If you want to save time on marking – of course you do, everyone does – get some rubber stamps with positive and negative phrases. They will let students know that you have seen their work, without having to write the same thing 30 times.



Classroom displays can be a great way of boosting engagement, and if you want your students to understand how relevant your subject is, try creating a space dedicated to "Our subject in the news". You can cut out clippings from newspapers, and print stories from online – you could ask students to contribute too. And if you want some cool artwork for your walls but don't want to spend a fortune on posters, there are programmes online such as **The Rasterbator** which allow you to print huge posters (made up of A4 sheets) of any image of your choice.





Easy as ABC
(or CPD): your
guide to school
acronyms

Education is awash with acronyms. ITT is tricky at the best of times, but it can be even harder if you don't know your SLT from your HOYs, HODs or HOFs – or your LOs from your LOs (yes, there are two kinds).

Here's our brief guide to the acronyms you are most likely to come across regularly (we would rival War and Peace if we included them all).

A

ACS – Average class size
Afl – Assessment for learning
ALIS – Advanced Level Indicator System (a personalised monitoring system for older students)
ALPS – Advanced Level Performance System (a programme, based on a national database, that provides reports for schools to help them benchmark and analyse post-16 performance)
AOT – Adult other than teacher
ASD – Autistic spectrum disorder
ASCL – Association of School and College Leaders
AT – Attainment target
ATL – Association of Teachers and Lecturers (a teaching union, which will join with the NUT in September 2017 to become the NEU, see below)

B

BIP – Behaviour improvement plan
BSP – Behaviour support plan
BTEC – Business and Technology Education Council qualification

C

CAF – Common assessment framework (a

tool that agencies use to assess if children and families need extra support)
CAMHS – Child and Adult Mental Health Services (an NHS service that assesses and treats young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties)
CCT – Chartered College of Teaching
CIF – Common inspection framework (sets out how Ofsted will inspect schools)
CoP – Code of practice
CP – Child protection
CPD – Continuous professional development
CPDL – Continuous professional development and learning (the same as above)

D

DCPO – Designated child protection officer
DfE – Department for Education

E

EAL – English as an additional language
Ebacc – English Baccalaureate
EBSD – Emotional, behavioural and social difficulties
EFL – English as a foreign language
EHCP – Education Health and Care Plan (These recently replaced statements of SEND – they document a child's health, educational and social needs, and the adjustments required to support them)
EIP – Early intervention programme
EWO – Education Welfare Officer (usually

employed by councils, they work with schools and families to encourage regular attendance)
EY – Early years
EYFS – Early years foundation stage

F

FFT – Fischer Family Trust (a charity that supports education research in the UK. It has a number of subsidiaries – FFT Education Limited provides lots of data and analysis to schools about pupil performance, and the trust also set up Education Datalab, a centre for education research)
FSM – Free school meals
FTE – Fixed-term exclusion (or it could be full-time equivalent)

G

GB – Governing board
GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ – General National Vocational Qualification
GSA – Girls' School Association (represents the heads of some independent and boarding schools)
G&T – Gifted and talented
GTC – General Teaching Council (used to regulate teachers and advise government but was scrapped)

H

HLTA – Higher level teaching assistant
HMC – Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (a professional association for leaders of top independent schools)

HMCI – Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (the head of Ofsted, currently Amanda Spielman)
HMI – Her Majesty's Inspector (an Ofsted Inspector)
HOD – Head of department
HOF – Head of faculty
HOY – Head of year
HT – Headteacher
HTB – Headteacher board (a group of academy and local school leaders who support and challenge regional schools commissioners)

I

IB – International Baccalaureate
IBP – Individual behaviour plan
IEP – Individual education plan/programme
ILR – Individualised Learner Record (FE's main data collection of the year. All publicly funded FE providers have to submit information that is used to monitor the sector.)
INSET – In-service education and training
ISA – Independent Schools Association (a representative body for heads and staff in independent schools)
ISB – Individual schools budget
ISC – Independent Schools Council (a service organisation that supports and speaks for independent schools and a range of associations in the independent sector)
ISI – Independent Schools Inspectorate (like Ofsted for independent schools that are members of the ISC)
ITE – Initial teacher education
ITT – Initial teacher training
IWB – Interactive whiteboard

J

JAR – Joint Area Review (a report into local services for young people)

K

KS – Key stage (so KS1 would be key stage one – five- to seven-year-olds)

L

LA – Local authority
LAC – Looked after children (any child cared for by the local authority, for example, in foster care or at home but monitored by social services)
LEA – Local education authority
LO – Learning objective
LO – Lesson observation
LSA – Learning support assistant

M

MAT – Multi-academy trust
MFL – Modern foreign languages
MLD – Moderate learning difficulties

N

NAHT – National Association of Head Teachers
NASBM – The National Association of School Business Management (a trade association for school business managers)
NASUWT – National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers

NCTL – National College for Teaching and Leadership (in charge of developing the teaching workforce, including allocating teacher training places, developing teaching schools and dishing out prohibition orders for disciplinary hearings)

NEU – National Education Union (an amalgamation of the NUT – see below – and ATL – see above – teaching unions that will start in September 2017 with full amalgamation in 2019)

NPQ – National professional qualification

NtG – Narrowing the gap

NUT – National Union of Teachers

NQT – Newly-qualified teacher

O

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education
Ofqual – Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulator

P

PCGE – Postgraduate Certificate of Education

PP – Pupil premium (additional funding that is specifically to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils)

PPA – Planning, preparation and assessment

PRP – Performance-related pay

PRU – Pupil referral unit

PSHE – Personal, social and health education (if you see a C near the end, it also includes citizenship)

PTA – Parent teacher association

PTR – Pupil teacher ratio

Q

QTS – Qualified teacher status

R

RAISEonline – Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation (online)

RoA – Record of achievement

RSC – Regional schools commissioner (these support and manage academies and free schools in their areas)

S

SATs – Statutory Assessment Tasks

Scitt – School-centred initial teacher training

SCR – Single central record

SDP – School development plan

SEF – Self evaluation form

SEN – Special educational needs

SENCo – Special educational needs co-ordinator

SEND – Special educational needs and disability

SIMS – School Information Management System (a data tool that many schools use)

SIP – School improvement plan

SLD – Severe learning difficulties

SLE – Specialist leader in education (experienced middle and senior leaders who support colleagues in other schools with leadership)

SLT – Senior leadership team

SMT – Senior management team

SoW – Scheme of work

SPaG – Spelling punctuation and grammar

STRB – School Teachers Review

Body (an advisory body that makes recommendations to government about salaries, duties and working hours, among other things)

T

TA – Teaching assistant

TES – Times Educational Supplement

TGIF – Thank God it's Friday (a feeling every student teacher will know well)

U

UPS – Upper pay scale

UCAS – University and College Admissions Service

V

VLE – virtual learning environment (online platforms where teachers can deliver learning, share materials and communicate with students)

A message from EdCentral's Founder



So you're becoming a teacher? I'm in complete awe of you. I couldn't do it – and neither could millions of others.

You need to remember that you're special because there will be times when you feel unappreciated, and you'll undoubtedly get cheesed off with people outside school banging on about how lucky you are to have so many holidays.

More than most, you really do have an opportunity to make a difference to society. Each time you enter a classroom, you have the chance to ignite something in your students. And, whatever you might think, you will make an impact on those young people.

I founded EdCentral because of two teachers who made a life-changing impact on me: one inspired and encouraged me, and the other did neither of those things, but without even realising, taught me an invaluable life lesson that I have fallen back on time and time again. I didn't tell them – I didn't even appreciate it myself at the time.

My dream is that EdCentral might make a difference to busy teachers like you by supporting your professional growth and, most importantly, by providing you with a safe space to network with your peers, support each other, share experiences, and discuss the issues you face.

We pull together relevant and easy-to-access content – covering teaching, lifestyle, education news, research and CPD – and we've built a professional networking platform that could be totally awesome (once teachers use it).

But we need your help. EdCentral is a totally independent, not-for-profit, social enterprise – and it's important that we stay that way so we remain free from government or any other bodies.

This means we depend on advertising and sponsors to keep us going, but to become what they call 'an attractive proposition' we need lots of teachers to join us. So please, if you have enjoyed our ebook, [sign up](#) (it's free) and recommend us to your colleagues.

Anyway, enough from me. I hope you've enjoyed reading this manual. Huge thanks go to the teachers and education experts who have contributed to it. The plan is to make it part of a series covering the first five years of your teaching career. If there's a topic you'd like us to cover – or if you fancy writing something yourself – get in touch with our amazing editor Zofia at zofia@edcentral.uk.

Thanks for listening. Good luck for the future. And don't ever let the buggers get you down!

Louise Holmes

