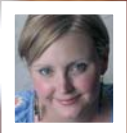




ace your first term



About to set out upon your primary teaching career? Verity Lush has some words of advice...

So here you are, with September beckoning and your first proper teaching job approaching fast. There'll be no more passing the buck after your placement finishes – that class of 30 will be yours and yours alone. Exciting, scary, daunting... and just a little bit thrilling, isn't it?

As soon as you leave school, you will have lost that feeling of living term to term, so when you re-enter the education system as a professional, you'll find it's back to square one: back to planning your life in three month chunks. And that's generally a good way to go, because

it's easy to be daunted by just how much work lies ahead. Most importantly, remember to take it as it comes, and to enjoy it. But if that sounds easier said than done, hopefully the following advice should help...

Preparation is key

September is a great time for all teachers. You're starting afresh and beginning with a clean slate (or should that be 'interactive whiteboard?'). Your resources are new, the pencils are sharpened, and you and your classroom are raring to go.

You'll have probably been into the school over

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was somewhat fortuitous – my trousers, unbeknownst to me until a revealing toilet trip, had split from front to back and were flapping open around my pants. Mortifying! Even to this day I can barely imagine what might have occurred, especially if the kids had been in school...

The name game

Of course, it won't be long before you'll actually have to meet the children who will now become your responsibility for the next academic year – and then you're going to have to teach them. By now you'll have been through enough rigorous training and have enough experience to find your feet pretty quickly, so try hard to focus some attention on your relationship with these kids and not just your fear of having nowhere to pass the buck!

There are certain things, like learning names and using them, that are crucial to beginning this process. Play name-learning games with your class – the kind that we as adults loathe having to do whenever we attend courses or similar. Find the school's 'mugshot' book prior to your first lesson and photocopy it so that you have a head start. Depending on your school, you may have an online photographic register that you can use, and this can help you become familiar with the children very quickly.

If all else fails, snoop at the front of their books as you work with the class and pop them in a seating plan for a little while. Use their names wherever possible and stick to your classroom rules. Use the consistency that you've been taught throughout training and always use your sense of humour. Don't be afraid to let the children initiate their learning, and inject as much vibrancy into your teaching as you can – you'll soon see the respect for you flood back.

Get organised

Last but not least, it's important to keep on top of the workload – this can be achieved simply by being pragmatic and organised. Use captivating activity ideas: image enquiries, hot-seating, vote with your feet, odd one out, optical illusions, riddles on the board, Chinese whispers, Kim's game, post-it notes hidden under seats – half with answers and half with questions, getting the kids to match up with their missing pair. The more enthusiasm that you can inspire in your students, the more they will enjoy your teaching and the more you will enjoy your teaching.

Remember, you're only just starting out. However good you are now, you'll be amazed by next September to look back and see how far you've come. You have your entire career ahead of you – grab it by the horns and enjoy every second.

Find out more



Verity Lush is an 'Outstanding' head of department and author of *Get Ready to Teach* (Pearson/Longman, 2009) – an easy-to-read guide, filled with practical advice, for NQTs embarking on their teaching career. www.pearsoned.co.uk

First-term tips

GET YOUR TEACHING CAREER OFF TO THE PERFECT START WITH THIS HANDY INSIDER INFO...

Have a first-day checklist. It pays to...

- Have a list at hand of your class
- Make sure you know when the first assemblies are and any information you need to give your class
- Have your diary up-to-date with important dates and warnings written in ahead of time for things like reports and so on
- Find out about and be confident with registration systems
- Have your first week planned
- Ensure you know what to teach, when and how you're going to do it
- Know what the school's sanction and rewards system is and be prepared to use it immediately
- Know how the technology in your room works
- Know where your equipment is or any that the students need
- Know who you need to call, should you need to, and how to do so

Be nice to everyone you meet. Some staff will be friendlier than others, as with all workplaces, but keep your own head high and be lovely – especially to those who work in the admin or reprographics side of a school. These are the people who hold the place together and you will need them time and time again.

Have innovative reward ideas (see *Get Ready to Teach* chapter four for some of these. The more creative the better!)

the summer in order to set your classroom up. It's great to make it as eye-catching and imaginative as possible – this is the first experience of you as a teacher that the kids will get, so make the most of it and aim for maximum impact. Try to introduce colour and posters or other images into every space that you can. You could also set up different stations around your room, e.g. an 'imagination station', a 'reading station' and so on. Help the students develop independence by printing 'sign up' leaflets for each so that they can write their name next to what they've been doing.

Take photos of your resources such as rulers and stick the photo, as well as the word, on the front of the box that they belong in. This will help younger children to recognise them. If you cover, for example, 'Castles and Dragons', why not make a cardboard castle or turrets for the kids to climb in – or make a dragon egg that is mysteriously 'laid' in the classroom and hatches overnight? You could add dragon footprints that run away from the eggshell...

In summary, just use your imagination and have fun with your room! Parents will notice this too and it helps you to stand out from everyone else.

Inset-ting in

You may begin your term with an Inset day. If so this is a great opportunity to begin getting to know people. If you have moved to the area then you can get advice on where to go in the evenings and what the social side of the school is like. Try not to be shy; chat to as many people as you can and start building those all-important working relationships with the staff.

I remember the first Inset day that I attended before I had qualified. I had no idea that I could have worn my jeans for the day and turned up instead in black trousers and a long black jacket. As it turned out the addition of the long jacket