

# Into the classroom

Our guide for student teachers



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# Into the classroom

Our guide for student teachers





## Message from Dr Mary Bousted General secretary, ATL

Dear student teacher,

Welcome to teaching and congratulations in choosing what we hope will prove to be a thoroughly rewarding and motivating career. If you're reading this booklet you'll have already made that first step towards becoming a teacher or lecturer and you're now ready to start your training. The road ahead may appear a little daunting right now but don't worry.

**By the time you finish your course you'll have all the skills, knowledge and confidence you need for that first step into your classroom – whether it be in a primary, secondary or further education setting, in the maintained or independent sector.**

To help you get there we have created this booklet for you, which should answer most of your questions, queries and concerns whilst studying. Of course, there is also a wealth of information on our website, [www.new2teaching.org.uk](http://www.new2teaching.org.uk), which has been designed especially for students and newly qualified members.

It's not just while you are a student that ATL can be of service – we are committed to hard work and meticulous preparation in the defence of our members' interests. At ATL, we want you to succeed because, as the education union, we care about teaching. With the ever-increasing demands on teachers it has become more and more important to have a collective voice. Successive governments have played with education and our conditions of employment for far too long. With your help, as a successful teacher or lecturer and future member, we will be able to influence policy before it is cast in stone.

Do also make use of our publications, which are second to none and will provide you with stimulating support throughout your course. I hope you find this booklet useful in your studies. May I take this opportunity to wish you a successful and rewarding course – we look forward to supporting you throughout your career!

**Dr Mary Bousted**  
General secretary, ATL



## Message from Aaron Porter President of the National Union of Students

Dear student teacher,

On behalf of both NUS and ATL, I would like to welcome you to the start of your career in teaching.

Together, we are here to help you every step of the way during your studies to become a teacher.

NUS has a wide variety of services and facilities available to you as a student, many of which can be accessed via our website at [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk). We also have National Executive Council members with specific responsibility for dealing with, among others, issues relating to initial teacher training students.

With over 160,000 members, ATL has a well-established presence in education. It offers an excellent level of support to members not just in terms of advice but in legal support on an individual basis. It also has an array of superb literature to help you throughout your career. Your course will be hard work, from your first placement right through to your final assessment, but hopefully it will be fun too! Whatever happens, NUS and ATL will be there to guide you. But for now we wish you the very best of luck with your future studies.

**Aaron Porter**  
NUS national president



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## Your school or college placement

Your first school or college placement is the very beginning of what will be a hugely exciting and rewarding career. Of course it can also be quite a nerve-wracking time but this guide should give you a head start. It offers tips and advice on your placement, especially in the first few weeks, as well as answering lots of commonly asked questions.

You should also remember that ATL is here to help. The ATL representative at your school can help or advise you on an entirely confidential basis (if you find there isn't one, contact your local branch secretary). ATL also keeps you up to date with developments in education through our range of publications and magazines, and we have a team of advisers ready to help you with any queries or problems (see page 16 for all the details).



## First things first

**Right from the start, you should think of yourself as a teacher. Your professionalism will be demonstrated through your interest in the students you teach, your commitment to the aspirations of the school you join and your appreciation of the teaching process itself. Such professionalism will be noticed and valued.**

Before you even start your placement, it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the structure and ethos of your placement school or college. Some higher education institutions will automatically provide you with information and may even arrange for you and other student teachers to visit the establishment for a group induction before your placement starts. If your institution

does not, it would be courteous to contact your mentor to confirm arrangements for your arrival. If you are invited, take the opportunity to visit the school or college in advance. This will alleviate some of the initial strain of being a new person in an unfamiliar environment.

If you cannot visit the school or college beforehand, try to find out as much as you can about it by looking at its website or by requesting a prospectus. You could also read the school/college's most recent inspection report (usually available online), which will give you useful information about the establishment, its strengths and weaknesses, and what issues it is currently addressing.

## First impressions

No matter how the initial contact between you and the school or college is made, always remember that first impressions matter. Take the initiative to introduce yourself, and be pleasant, courteous and friendly to everyone you come into contact with. It's worth noting that not only may schools and colleges provide references for you in the future, but they also frequently employ students who have completed successful placements with them. It's therefore in your best interests to make a good impression at all times.



## What not to wear

The best advice is to dress conservatively on the first day and observe what colleagues are wearing. Some schools have unwritten rules on hairstyles, make-up, jewellery, the wearing of denim, etc, so it's probably best to ask your mentor in advance if you are unsure about something you wish to wear. Whether or not you agree with the school or college rules on standards of appearance, it could create unnecessary problems for you if you do not conform.



## Your first day

Aim to familiarise yourself as much as you can on your first day with the layout of the school or college – it's always good to find the staffroom, kettle and toilets as soon as possible! You will also need to know the timings and routine of the school or college day, eg lesson times, playground duty, etc. Be sure to find out how and where you can secure your personal belongings. You should be given a locker, lockable drawer or secure area in the staffroom.

It is essential that you are familiar with the school/college's emergency procedures (what to do in case of fire and where the fire exits are, the first-aid procedure, etc). You should also establish the protocol for matters such as reporting sickness and leaving the school or college premises during the working day.

## Policies and procedures

More specific information on the school and college ethos can be found in the policies, with which you should familiarise yourself. Key policies, for example, include those on:

- equal opportunities
- behaviour
- homework
- school uniform, the wearing of jewellery, etc.

You should also find out from your mentor what is and is not expected of student teachers with regard to certain tasks.

For example, as a result of the National Agreement in England and Wales, you are no longer expected to carry out 24 specified administrative tasks. The National Agreement doesn't apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland currently. However, a similar arrangement exists in Scotland under the 2001 agreement, *A teaching profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*.

## Resources

Schools and colleges have limited resources so you should establish at the start of your placement exactly what equipment and which resources are available, and if limits are imposed upon their use (there may also be booking arrangements for some equipment). Also, check who pays for what (photocopying, telephone calls and stationery, for example), and find out what students are expected to provide for themselves.

## Your first few weeks

**You may like to consider some of the following ideas to help you through your first few weeks.**

- Give yourself a few key goals for the first week. For example, you won't learn all the students' names, but you could aim to cement a handful in your mind each day.
- Take time to read through the records your school or college has on each student you teach. Ask relevant pastoral heads if there is anything specific you should know about your students – for example, any medical conditions they may have, their previous national curriculum levels reached and any special educational needs (SEN) you should be aware of.
- Make a point of introducing yourself to the non-teaching staff: they will invariably come to your rescue at some stage of the new term!
- Make a note of anything that crops up over the first few days that you need to get clarified. Hopefully your mentor or the headteacher/principal will be available to go through these with you later on. Individual school or college policies should cover most questions so it is worth spending some time each day familiarising yourself with these. Look out in particular for policies on teaching the gifted and talented, discipline, teaching and learning, and assessment.

## Professional relationships

Teaching is all about relationships. In your placement, these will primarily be between you and the following.

### Your mentor

This is likely to be your most important professional relationship and time should be set aside for you to meet your mentor on a regular basis. Do bear in mind, however, that your mentor will have other commitments and responsibilities so try to be as flexible as possible when arranging meetings.



### Other teaching colleagues

During your placement, you will obviously work closely with a number of other permanent teaching staff. Headteachers, deputy headteachers, year heads, or class teachers should, and usually will, be happy to give you the benefit of their own teaching experience. However, don't expect them to initiate this support. Many will want to give you space to learn through your own experience, so don't be afraid to ask if you need advice.

### Support staff

Within the school community, you will meet a variety of support staff from classroom assistants to librarians or technicians. Find out from your mentor what kind of work teaching assistants generally do in that particular school, and ask to be properly introduced to any support staff that you will be working closely with.

### Parents/guardians

Initially, it's unlikely that you'll be expected to deal directly with parents/guardians but, as the placement develops, you may be asked to have a role in reporting to them, perhaps by attending parents' evenings. Ask your mentor what you will be expected to do in this regard. For example, in some secondary schools, students carry 'contact books' which are used regularly for communicating between teachers and parents/guardians.

Remember that, although you are a trainee, parents/guardians will view you as a member of the school or college staff. However, you should not arrange or agree to have a meeting with a parent or guardian without having a fully qualified member of staff present. Again, if in doubt, consult your mentor or your ATL representative.

## Your students

Colleagues should be able to provide you with invaluable information about your students (for example if a student is having problems at home which may affect her or his behaviour in class). Valuable information can also be gleaned from your students' individual education plans or from the school's SEN register. You can also get to know your students by observing how colleagues relate to and deal with them, and by assisting with extra-curricular activities (see 'Taking on additional duties' on page 15).

**It is important to establish clear expectations of behaviour at the very start of your relationship with your students. To help achieve this, you should:**

- know what the school or college procedures are for praise (commendations, points, etc) and punishments (demerits, detentions, etc)
- create and maintain an orderly environment
- be consistent and firm
- show respect to your students (and hope it is reciprocated!)
- use praise and encouragement frequently
- be in control
- have a sense of humour!

## Organisation

**Organisational skills may not come naturally to you! However, your life will be much easier if you are well-organised and this is undoubtedly one of the keys to successful teaching.**

### Organisation in the classroom

Try to establish prompt and businesslike routines for:

- starting and ending lessons
- checking student absences
- calling the register
- distributing and collecting equipment
- setting/returning homework.

Make sure that, no matter how busy you are with lesson preparation, you also keep up to date with lesson evaluation. Good evaluation will help you to learn from any mistakes and to gain the maximum benefit from your teaching practice.



## Organising yourself

Remember to leave yourself sufficient time to set out any learning resources required for lessons. Find out beforehand the availability and working order of any equipment to be used, and ensure you book specialist rooms and organise tasks such as photocopying well in advance.

## Punctuality and deadlines

One of the hallmarks of a professional is that they are always in the right place at the right time. Within the school, it is important to realise that you will inconvenience others if you don't stick strictly to the school or college timetable. It goes without saying that you should also aim to attend meetings on time, and keep to any deadlines set by your mentor or colleagues.



## Time management

**Most teachers, if questioned, say that they never have enough time – they always feel that more could be done, if only! Your placement will give you a good idea of the tasks you will have to juggle and how much time is required to complete them.**

**Make sure you use this experience to work out how to organise yourself and manage your time effectively.**

### Remember to:

- ensure that college paperwork is kept up to date and that forms are handed in on time; also make sure you know when your college tutor is coming in to observe you, and that you are thoroughly prepared to discuss progress
- plan ahead and prioritise your tasks according to deadlines
- earmark particular tasks for particular times so that you can establish a routine
- set up a suitable filing system, and file things straightaway so that you don't waste valuable time hunting for important information
- batch homework to be marked in separate piles in a safe place; if a student hands in work late, add it to the right batch immediately to avoid losing it
- clear up as you go along – however hard it is, try to remain free of clutter!

## Rights and responsibilities

**Your placement is a partnership between the school/college and your higher education institution. As a student teacher, you will have certain rights and responsibilities.**

### You can expect:

- regular meetings with your mentor (but remember to be flexible)
- constructive written feedback on your lessons on a regular basis
- the same support mechanisms that are available to other staff at the school/college
- maintenance of the link between your higher education institution and the school/college.

### For your part, you should:

- conduct yourself in a professional manner
- take all reasonable care of students who are in your charge
- prepare your work adequately
- comply with school or college policies
- comply with your course requirements
- take reasonable care of school equipment and students' property.

Of course, to gain the maximum benefit from your placement, you should involve yourself in the broader life of the school or college by taking part in extra-curricular activities, observing staff meetings, attending parents' evenings, etc.

Do, however, be realistic about committing yourself – there is life beyond school or college!

## Taking on additional duties

There are many additional duties and tasks you could take on, from joining the parent-staff association to putting on the Christmas concert or running a club linked to your subject specialism. However, you are perfectly justified in keeping these additional duties to a minimum while you focus on settling into the profession. If you have any concerns about additional tasks that you are asked to undertake, you should discuss them with your mentor: Teachers should not be asked to do supervision duties at lunchtime, at the end of the morning session or at the beginning of the afternoon session.

## Looking after yourself

**It's essential to realise that you cannot perform well as a teacher if you are not at your best, both physically and mentally.**

Try to maintain a stress-free home environment and get plenty of sleep so that you can devote all your energies to the experience. It's just as important, though, not to let your placement take over your life. The best teachers have plenty of outside interests which enable them to maintain a well-adjusted and balanced approach.



## When the going gets tough...

**Hopefully, your placement will be problem-free. However, if problems do occur, you should try to tackle them straightaway – they rarely go away by being ignored!**

Your first source of assistance should be your mentor. Remember also that schools and colleges have established support mechanisms which you can access if you experience problems with teaching groups or individual students.

Never forget that ATL is also on hand to offer you personal support and advice on any problem.

In the first instance you can speak to the ATL representative at your school or contact your local branch secretary. The following is also available to ATL members:

- **General enquiries:** 020 7930 6441 (during office hours) or 020 7782 1612 (between 5pm-8pm, Monday to Friday during term time)\*

## Your questions answered

The start of a new career always brings with it lots of questions. The following provides answers to some of the most common questions ATL is asked by our student members.

### Issues with students

**Is it acceptable to comfort a distressed student by putting an arm around her or him?**

Be cautious when comforting a distressed student with physical contact. If comforting is necessary (for example if a child is crying uncontrollably) then comfort her or him until her or his immediate needs are met, and then cease as soon as she or he is calm. Physical comfort should not be given in private and it is generally considered appropriate only for younger children.

Always avoid any contact with a pupil/student that could be misconstrued or cause offence. It is wise to consider the following factors in these situations:

- the student's gender, age and ethnicity
- the nature of the distress and her or his needs
- the physical environment – including the proximity of other students and adults.





### Should one-to-one contact be avoided?

It is unrealistic for teachers or lecturers to always avoid being alone with students. In some situations (such as music lessons) one-to-one teaching is entirely normal. However, misunderstandings can more easily occur in one-to-one situations so be mindful of the general precautions suggested below.

#### Notification

Colleagues (or, where appropriate, the student's parent/guardian) should – wherever possible – be aware in advance of the lesson or meeting.

#### Location and environment

Where possible, avoid locations for the lesson or meeting that could appear clandestine. Remote areas, closed or locked doors and rooms without windows are all unhelpful in this respect. Where appropriate, talk to the student with a desk between you, or arrange the environment to avoid unnecessary physical contact.

#### Contact

Avoid physical contact unless strictly necessary and, if it is (or becomes) necessary, studiously avoid any contact which could be (mis)construed as sexual.

#### Reporting

If a student becomes emotional or distressed during a one-to-one lesson or meeting, report this promptly and discreetly to a senior colleague.

### How should I deal with confidential information from students?

Teachers and lecturers are not legally obliged to inform parents or guardians automatically of confidential disclosures by students (eg concerning their emotional lives). In accordance with the 'Gillick' judgement and the principles of the Children Act 1989, teachers and lecturers are entitled to make reasonable professional judgements on this issue – recognising that young people are entitled to more control over matters affecting them as they mature.

Schools and colleges should have a policy on confidentiality. If the matter is highly sensitive, it is appropriate for you to discuss the confidential information with a senior colleague. Remember to inform the student concerned if you decide that you have to pass on her or his confidential disclosure to another person.

**If the disclosure relates to a child protection issue, then you have a specific obligation to report it to the designated member of staff (or the headteacher/principal) without delay.**

For more information, please contact ATL (see page 16 for contact details). You may also like to refer to the Brook Advisory Centre's publications, many of which are specifically aimed at helping young people deal with relationship issues. See [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk) for more details.

### What happens if I take charge of something owned by a student and then I lose it?

Where a teacher or lecturer confiscates (or takes charge of) a student's property, she or he is responsible for taking reasonable care of it. Schools and colleges should have a policy on handling a student's property – ensuring that it is kept securely, that there are records of the property being held and there are clear rules on its return within a reasonable time.

If reasonable care is not taken and the property is lost, students are entitled to claim compensation against the school or college. There should be no expectation of the teacher or lecturer having to reimburse the cost personally. However, if this is requested, contact ATL for advice (see contact details on page 16).



## Behaviour

### Am I entitled to refuse to teach a disruptive student?

No. Teachers and lecturers have no formal right to refuse to teach a student. To do so is, strictly speaking, industrial action (which is subject to detailed rules on balloting, notice, etc). Refusal to teach is therefore an 'industrial action' weapon to be used only as a last resort – with careful advice from ATL.

A headteacher/principal does have the power to exclude violent or seriously disruptive students, either for a fixed period or permanently (subject to the student's right to appeal).



### What sanctions do teachers and lecturers have to discipline students?

The school or college should have in place a behaviour and discipline policy that states clearly what sanctions are available and who has the power to impose them. Student teachers and lecturers should clarify what authority they have to impose punishments, and if there are circumstances where they must refer an issue to a senior colleague.

The school or college should publish an escalating system of sanctions, usually ranging from removal from classes, loss of privileges (such as having to stay in at break times), reporting to senior staff, contact with parents/guardians, being placed on 'report' and behaviour 'contracts',

through to temporary or ultimately permanent exclusions.

When it comes to exclusions, only the headteacher/principal can exclude a student from school or college and she or he must observe a procedure when doing so. Detentions can be imposed only when this is 'reasonable in all the circumstances'.

Finally, one thing is clear: corporal punishment is not a legitimate sanction.

For more information, see your local authority's policy. You might also like to look up the 2007 guidelines, *School discipline and behaviour policies*, available at [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk).

### Am I entitled to physically restrain a pupil?

The Education Act authorises teachers (and others who have charge of pupils) to use reasonable force on pupils in maintained schools or publicly funded pupils in independent schools in the following situations:

- to prevent them from committing a criminal offence, eg assaulting another pupil or member of staff
- to prevent pupils from injuring themselves or others
- to deal with an immediate danger to property, including the pupil's own property
- to maintain discipline at school or on trips out of school, eg where the pupil's behaviour is causing a serious disruption.

Independent schools are advised to adopt the same approach for all their pupils. All schools should have a policy about the use of force to control or restrain pupils, which you should familiarise yourself with.

Please note: [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) was the website for education guidance and legislation at the time this edition of *Into the Classroom* was printed, but this may change under the new government.

In these situations, remember the following guidelines:

- use your voice first – verbal instructions should be given before and during any physical intervention
- use restraint only when necessary to resolve the incident – this should be the minimum force required, lasting for the shortest practicable time
- the purpose should be restraint and the reduction of risk – do not strike blows or retaliate against pupils; to do so would exceed your authorisation to intervene and run the risk of an allegation of assault being made.

For the latest guidance on restraint, look up [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk).

For further advice in Northern Ireland, visit [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk).

In Scotland, *Safe and well: good practice in schools and education authorities for keeping children safe and well*, a handbook for schools and education authorities, covers restraint and is available from [www.scotland.gov.uk/publications](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications).



## What should I do if I am assaulted?

There are a number of steps outlined below that you should consider following a physical assault:

- You should be allowed access to a private area where you can sit with a friend. You may wish to go home, if so, appropriate arrangements including transport should be made.
- You may have to attend your GP or a hospital, accompanied by a friend, representative or colleague.
- A medical assessment of any injury should be made as soon as practicable. In cases of visible injuries, it is helpful to obtain photographs, which can be important evidence in any subsequent claim or legal proceedings.
- Report the incident to the headteacher/principal.
- A written record of the assault, any injury and the circumstances leading up to the assault should be made as soon as possible.
- Depending on the severity and/or effects of an injury, you may be able to claim industrial injuries disablement benefit. You should contact your nearest industrial injuries benefit centre. See [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) or, in Northern Ireland, [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk).
- Report the incident to the police promptly. You may be reluctant to do this but it is an important step to take, particularly if you seek compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) scheme.

You should also contact ATL for advice where appropriate on issues such as sick pay, compensation and ATL's assaults insurance for members. For a copy of ATL's guidance, *Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse* (free to members), call ATL Despatch on **0845 4500 009** or download it from [www.atl.org.uk/publications](http://www.atl.org.uk/publications).



## Health and safety

### What is my position if an accident happens in my class?

Schools and colleges have a duty to provide appropriate support and training to student teachers and lecturers to minimise the risk of accidents. However, even if you are still in training, you do have an obligation to take reasonable care of students. This is often explained as the care a reasonable parent would exercise, taking account of the numbers, ages, abilities and any special educational and/or medical needs, and the usual standard of behaviour of the students, the location and the risks associated with the activity taking place.

If an accident does occur, first aid should, of course, be called for if necessary and a record made in the school or college accident book as soon as possible. Details should also be sent to ATL. It is advisable to retain copies of any accident reports or statements made, since they can be relevant to any subsequent claim for compensation. Fortunately, such claims are almost invariably pursued against the employer (and their insurers), rather than against the individual teacher or lecturer. In the (most unlikely) event of a claim being raised against a member for an accident to a student, contact ATL for advice (see contact details on page 16).

### Am I responsible for the safety of students if I take them away from the school or college site?

Teachers or lecturers taking students on trips or visits have an obligation to take reasonable care of them – taking account of the students' ages, aptitudes, any special educational and/or medical needs, the risks associated with the activity and the environment concerned, which should be considered in the risk assessment(s). You should follow the school/college procedures for off-site activities. If an accident happens, any claim for compensation is highly likely to be brought against the employer, who is vicariously liable for the actions and omissions of its employees.

For more information, you may like to order a copy of ATL's publication, *Taking students off site*, (free to members) available via ATL Despatch on **0845 4500 009** or at [www.atl.org.uk/publications](http://www.atl.org.uk/publications).



## Should I give first aid to students?

Surprisingly, the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 only require employers to have first aiders to deal with employees, not others such as students. Nevertheless, it is recommended that there should be provision of first aid for students and visitors to the school or college. Schools and colleges should therefore have clear and published procedures for dealing with first aid.

First aid should normally be administered only by a qualified first aider. However, if an emergency arises in the absence of a first aider, the 'appointed person' should be asked to take charge. Though not a fully trained first aider, an appointed person can perform certain emergency procedures such as resuscitation, provided s/he has received training. In the absence of a first aider or appointed person, teachers and lecturers are entitled to use their best endeavours to protect the health and welfare of students in their charge. Although there is a risk of liability if the first aid was to go wrong, in practice the risk is very small. To date, we have heard of no case in which school or college staff have been successfully sued for compensation for giving inappropriate first aid in good faith to deal with an emergency.

## Am I responsible for administering medication to students?

School and college staff are not obliged to give medication to or to supervise a student taking medication unless it is a term of their contract. Primary responsibility rests with parents or guardians who should inform the school or college promptly of the student's medical needs. If the administration of medication or supervision of a student taking his/her medicine during the school or college day and/or during activities off-site is required, appropriate safeguards should be in place. These include a written agreement with the parent or guardian and an agreed procedure for dealing with any medical emergency.

Teachers and lecturers who administer medication should therefore be treated as volunteers. It is reasonable for your employers to confirm in writing that their insurance arrangements fully indemnify staff who volunteer. Those who do so must be given appropriate training and information beforehand. It is advisable for schools and colleges to have written procedures for managing and administering medication to students.

Further information is available from ATL's member advisers on **020 7930 6441**.



## What should I do if furniture needs to be moved in a classroom?

Unfortunately, manual handling operations – the lifting, carrying, pushing or moving of a heavy object (or person) by hand or bodily force – are a major source of injury in the workplace. Lifting anything even moderately heavy in the wrong way can result in strain or injury, especially to the back. Back injury is one of the main causes of sickness absence. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 oblige employers to carry out risk assessments aimed at minimising the health risks associated with manual handling, based on the principle of avoiding carrying out these tasks, where possible. ATL therefore advises you to exercise caution and to avoid lifting or manoeuvring heavy or awkwardly shaped loads, such as

desks or filing cabinets. In addition, the weight of minor equipment and books should be carefully considered, before any attempt is made to move them. You should always call for assistance – from the caretaker, for example. Full use should be made of trolleys or other mechanical aids. Any injury should be recorded promptly in the school or college accident book and you should retain a copy of it.



## Salaries

### What will my starting salary be dependent on?

The pay for teachers in the maintained sector in England and Wales is governed by The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. A newly qualified teacher taking up his or her first teaching appointment in a maintained school can expect to start on main pay scale point 1 (M1), in England and Wales. Salary arrangements in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Channel Islands do differ. For details, including pay scales, see the ATL website at [www.atl.org.uk/pay-scales](http://www.atl.org.uk/pay-scales).

It may be possible to negotiate a higher starting salary. Schools or local authorities do have the discretion to recognise other relevant experience when setting an appropriate starting salary. If you feel that you have relevant experience (for example experience of teaching in the independent sector or previous employment experience relevant to your subject area) then you can ask for this to be taken into consideration

when your starting salary is set. Schools should have a pay policy which sets out the extent to which they will exercise their discretion to award additional points in recognition of other relevant experience. In England and Wales, schools have the discretion to award up to one further incremental point per year for years of relevant experience.

However, in practice many set a ceiling on the number of points that will be awarded in this way and some will award discretionary points at the rate of one point for so many years of relevant experience (eg one point for every three complete years of relevant experience). The best time to discuss starting salary and discretionary points is when you receive a firm offer of employment. If you are awarded a discretionary point or points, this entitlement will be permanent and will be carried forward to any subsequent teaching appointment in the maintained sector.

You may be able to negotiate a recruitment allowance. This is determined by the school and can be paid for up to three years. It may be a non-cash benefit, such as gym membership.

Independent schools and academies are free to determine their own arrangements so pay systems vary widely in this sector (although this isn't necessarily the case in Scotland). However, as the dominant employer of teachers, the maintained sector sets a benchmark which most independent schools and academies seek to match or better.

If you have been appointed to a sixth form college, your qualifications and experience will be taken into account at the time of appointment (other relevant experience may also be included at the discretion of the college).



Once you are appointed to a post, you should ask for a copy of any documentation which relates to salaries, for example a college pay policy.

## Observation

### If my school undergoes an inspection, will my lessons be observed by inspectors?

Generally, inspections now tend to be brief and very tightly focused, and inspectors will discuss with a headteacher which lessons they need to see in order to get a picture of the school. Normally they avoid seeing students, supply teachers, etc where at all possible, unless this is a particular issue for the school.

If, by chance, an inspector should find themselves with a student, they will apply their criteria with regard to the experience and training of the teacher being observed. All teachers, students or not, are entitled to feedback and this will be given with sensitivity to the teacher's status.



## If I'm observing a teacher working with a class that I will eventually take over and the class is not behaving as I would wish, should I intervene?

ATL would advise you not to intervene: on occasions like this, you are present to observe, learn and note. However, you should definitely discuss what you observed with the teacher afterwards in order to establish how much of what you saw was actually noticed, and the reasons why the teacher managed the class in that way. It is sometimes said that you should seek first to understand and then to be understood – this is a good principle here. You can probably learn a great deal in relation to the problems that you are likely to have with the same class, which you can then integrate into your own teaching.

This is not to say that you will never encounter teachers who are less effective at managing behaviour or difficult classes but, in most instances, schools place student teachers very carefully and ATL does not think that these problems are likely to occur very often.

If you do have serious reasons for concern, discuss them with your higher education institute (HEI) tutor or mentor at the school and agree what you would say to the teacher you are observing. You should make a report of what you have noticed and discuss what you plan to change with your mentor. Then, when you are observed, you will be able to compare the way you are managing the class with the other teacher's style.

Remember, too, that a change of teaching styles will unsettle students and you might need to adapt your preferred style to bring it closer to their current experiences. It is also crucial for you to check the school's policies on both teaching and behaviour management. The teacher may have acted in this way because the school is trying to make a transition from one form of classroom management to another, where students take more responsibility for their own behaviour.

From a professional point of view, ATL takes the view that no teacher or lecturer should ever undermine the status of another professional in front of the class. You should always support your colleagues. The sole (and rare) exception would be if the students were in real danger, or if there were particular examples of extreme bad behaviour or bullying that you could see but the teacher could not.



## Your mentor

### What level of support should I receive from my mentor?

First of all, there is no specific and consistent job description which applies to the role of a mentor. Furthermore, the word 'mentor' is often used to describe many different roles and, sometimes, a person who is called a mentor may not even really understand the extent of the responsibilities that this implies.

Your mentor could be:

- a member of the senior management team who has specific responsibilities for initial teacher training in the school and perhaps even for the professional development programme
- an advanced skills or chartered teacher who has mentoring as one of her or his professional duties
- a head of department, possibly acting as subject mentor
- a colleague who has voluntarily agreed to share a class with you and to provide you with some support, but who is untrained and inexperienced and who regards this as very much second to her or his particular responsibility for teaching pupils.

Furthermore, the partnerships between HEIs and their partner schools can vary

widely. Some schools do not want the full responsibility of initial teacher training and training student teachers, and so are prepared only to take a lower profile in mentoring. In other partnerships, there are very clear and demanding expectations of schools (although these may vary according to whether it's your first placement or your final one on which you will be assessed).

The best way to gain an understanding of the level of support that is expected in your teacher training partnership is to ask your HEI tutor and/or to look at the partnership materials, especially those relating to mentoring.

ATL would expect a mentor to provide you with:

- a regular allocated time in which you can discuss, plan, get advice on and review your work to date
- constructive feedback on any of your observed lessons.

ATL would also expect there to be more frequent, informal contacts and a general empathy with and awareness of the kind of problems you may be encountering.



## What can I do if I feel my mentor is not giving me sufficient support?

If you feel you are not being given adequate support, you must speak to both your HEI tutor and the most senior person responsible for initial teacher training and student teachers in your school. ATL appreciates that you may find this difficult, and can provide advice and support on how to raise your concerns.

You must be sure that:

- you are specific about what support you are not receiving
- you have listened to advice when it has been given
- you have made, or really tried to make, your problems clear to your mentor.

Good mentors will have been trained to understand how it feels to be a new teacher. They will be aware of how difficult it is to take on board all the responsibilities of teaching and to see how all the individual requirements add up to the total process of successful teaching for effective learning. They are an invaluable asset to your success as a teacher. Regrettably, as ATL has argued repeatedly, training in the skills of mentoring has been far too neglected in government programmes for professional development. No matter what stage of teaching you are at, everyone needs a good mentor and, just as no one forgets a good teacher, no one forgets a good mentor either!



ATL is the union for education professionals across the UK. Active in the maintained, independent and post-16 sectors, we use our members' experiences to influence education policy, and we work with government and employers to secure fair pay and working conditions. From early years to HE, teachers to support staff, lecturers to leaders, we support and represent our members throughout their career.

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