

# New Teachers' Tips for a Brilliant Induction Year



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Ever wondered if teaching is like stepping into a comedy show where you're the star of a live performance, but the script is still being written? When I first qualified as a teacher back in 2002, I had the grand idea that I knew what I was in for. Spoiler alert: I didn't! Most of us would probably agree that our first classroom experience felt a bit like diving into the deep end of a pool we hadn't learned to swim in yet.

I still chuckle at the memory of my very first RS lesson as a PGCE student. There I was, standing at the front of the class with my meticulously prepared lesson plan and resources, only to be met with 32 pairs of expectant eyes, waiting for me to say or do... something. It's funny to think about now, but it was tough at the time. Confidence levels vary, but what's crucial to remember is that every one of us has the potential to grow and become an amazing teacher. It takes time, but we can absolutely get there.

Recently, I had the chance to talk with early career teachers who had just completed their first year at schools that are part of our CPD membership and took part in our ['Advancing Teachers Programme—Helping Teachers to Thrive, a nine-week training course'](#). Hearing their insights was both enlightening and inspiring. When I asked them for their top tips for newcomers to the profession, their responses were incredible.

So, with their permission, I've compiled their ideas in no particular order in this short blog. Whether you've just completed your first year of teaching, joined a new school, or read this as an ECT mentor or senior leader looking for creative ways to improve your induction programme for newly appointed early career teachers, these tips are well worth a read. You might even want to create your own list and revisit it at the end of each term.

Here we go!

**Tip 1: Seek Help When Needed:** No one expects you to have all the answers from day one. Show your dedication to your role and your students, but remember, it's perfectly okay to ask for help. Whether you need help with planning a lesson, handling a parent's concerns, or managing student relationships, your mentor, department head, or colleagues—new or seasoned—are there to support you.

**Tip 2: Stay Positive:** Your attitude sets the tone for your classroom. Even on the busiest days, strive to stay upbeat. It's not about being hyper-energetic, but about maintaining a positive outlook. Learn to set boundaries to avoid burnout and make time for yourself outside of school to recharge with friends and family.

**Tip 3: Keep Building Positive Relationships with Students:** As mentioned earlier, you'll have good days and bad days. Don't take things personally, even when students test your boundaries. Stay calm and focus on how to resolve issues constructively. Seek support from staff, heads of year, or pastoral leads when needed, but take ownership of the situation. Show your students that you can guide them and handle challenges, with support from colleagues when necessary.

**Tip 4: Connect with Your School Community:** Being new means you need to make yourself known. Introduce yourself to teachers and support staff, and engage with students during lesson changeovers, breaks, and school events. Get involved with extracurricular activities and proactively join staff events to build relationships.

**Tip 5: Plan to the 'T':** When planning lessons, think deeply about the activities you'll use to get students' brains fully engaged. Don't talk at them too long; keep a timer for how long you talk, and break up the lesson with shorter and longer activities. Don't just settle for the first answer they give you—remember to let them do the hard work. Be flexible in your teaching and support those who need it while providing more challenging work.

**Tip 6: Stay on Top of Marking:** Follow your school's marking policy and ensure your feedback encourages students to act on it. Avoid vague comments like "good" or "keep up the good work"—these don't help students grow. Make your feedback actionable, provide specific advice on their core work, and give them time to reflect and respond.

**Tip 7: Reflect and Keep Targets Manageable:** Don't try to improve everything at once. Focus on what's working well for you, set small, achievable goals, and reflect on them during mentoring or department meetings. Use this time to evaluate what's effective and what may need to be done differently.

**Tip 8: Weekly Mentoring Sessions:** These sessions provided invaluable space for dialogue, allowing us to get to know our new teachers and build positive relationships. They were instrumental in giving us the confidence we needed. We used this time to focus on weekly developments, review classroom teaching practices, discuss research, and cover general expectations such as parents' evenings, assessment data, and report writing.

**Tip 9: You Don't Need to Tell Students You're New:** Even if you feel just a few steps ahead of them—or sometimes even behind—there's no need to share this with your students. Focus on building your confidence in the classroom without making your experience level a topic of conversation.

**Tip 10: Teaching & Learning Toolkit:** We were given a concise list of easy-to-use classroom strategies, each fitting on a single A4 page. These basic survival guides covered essential topics such as behaviour management, assessment for learning, effective marking strategies, and SEND strategies. They were incredibly useful, and we revisited these ideas weekly during our mentoring sessions and meetups with new teachers. Discussing how we applied these strategies, what worked well, and areas for improvement greatly contributed to our development.

**Tip 11: Read Around Your Subject and Teaching:** Dive into teaching and learning books or articles whenever you can. Your school library likely has plenty of resources. If you're pressed for time, focus on individual chapters rather than the whole book. This can help broaden your perspective on education, both internationally and locally, and keep you up-to-date on what works well in the classroom.

**Tip 12: Non-Judgmental Lesson Observations:** Observations are a valuable way to learn from colleagues and receive feedback, but they're most effective when followed by open discussions. In our school, we schedule two non-judgmental observations each term, ensuring that time is set aside afterwards for a reflective, coaching-style conversation. This process focuses on celebrating successes and identifying areas for growth. Senior and middle leaders step in to cover lessons so that both the observer and the observed have time for these meaningful discussions.

**Tip 13: Stay Solution-Focused:** Don't let unhelpful comments like, "They don't do this for me" or "They don't behave like this for me" bring you down. These statements can make you feel like you've failed. Instead, turn to supportive colleagues who will help you brainstorm practical solutions, boost your confidence and help you move forward.

I'd like to close by sharing my thoughts on these strategies and why I believe they're crucial from a school leader's perspective. In every school I've worked in or led, I always seek feedback from early career teachers to refine and improve what we continually give to our staff.

We are responsible for nurturing their growth, and I hope they see our investment in their success—because this ultimately benefits not only them but also our students and the wider school community.

**We are part of xxx school because...**

**For all Early Career Teachers, these essentials matter:**

- Staff should **walk through our doors** and immediately know their role matters and why they've been chosen to work here. It's our job as leaders to make this clear.
- They should see and feel the school's vision and culture radiating throughout, not just on the website.

- They will be expected to participate in an **outstanding induction programme** guided by experienced, expert teachers and supported by mentors.
- Regularly **seek feedback from your ECTs**. What's working? What do they need? If something isn't feasible, explain why.
- From day one, reinforce the message that we are all **continuous learners no matter what position we hold in the school**. We are all expected to improve at every opportunity as teachers.
- Benefit from a lighter timetable to help balance the demands of their first year.
- **Praise, Praise, Praise:** Celebrate and acknowledge students' efforts frequently. Don't wait until the end of term—positive reinforcement in the moment builds confidence and encourages sustained effort.

Thanks for reading, and here's to a successful year!



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