

HOW TO THRIVE AS AN NQT

Jo Darley, Jenna Eccles and David Shanks share their top tips to help you excel in your first year of teaching



PROFILE

Jo Darley

Jo Darley is a French and Spanish specialist and has many years of experience teaching and leading languages at both primary and secondary levels. She currently supports L.E.A.D Academy trust schools in Nottingham, Leicester and Sheffield with their delivery of languages.

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Jo Darley, French and Spanish specialist

USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE

Remember that you may be inheriting some classes who aren't used to hearing lots of target language. You could try using the target language with other colleagues when they are in the classroom, rewarding students who use L2 and having some sort of signal for the class indicating that only target language is allowed at that time. There are some really useful ideas in Allison Chase's 2015 book, *Target Language Toolkit*.

BE SOCIABLE

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Colleagues in your department will have experience you can draw on and will know many of the children. Also, make use of all sources of support – including social media. Twitter (#mfitwitterati) and Facebook (Secondary MFL matters and Secondary MFL in Wales) are excellent sources of CPD and support, and full of kind, generous colleagues who will readily share resources and ideas with you – especially if you are prepared to share too! Twitter and Facebook will often also signpost training courses, as well as helpful blogs and books. Look out for ALL network events and TeachMeets in your area.



This book has practical and workable ideas

NQTs can get support and resources from multiple sources



“Routines and boundaries are key. The link between effective behaviour management and progress is tangible”

Jenna Eccles, French and Spanish teacher



PROFILE

Jenna Eccles

Jenna Eccles trained through the School Direct programme, completing her PGCE in 2014. She currently teaches French and Spanish at KS3 and KS4 at Scalby School in Scarborough.

CREATE INTERNATIONAL LINKS

Partnerships with schools abroad can make your lessons more meaningful – see the British Council's Schools Online website. Consider linking up with a school via eTwinning or hosting a German teacher for a few weeks – a fantastic way to increase cultural awareness. The Institut Français runs similar programmes. There also might be someone employed by your local authority or academy trust who can help. Don't neglect personal contacts and, if you have one, contacts your Foreign Languages Assistant can share.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

- British Council: schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/partner-school
- eTwinning: www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm
- UK-German Connection: www.ukgermanconnection.org/hostateacher
- Institut Français: tinyurl.com/mobilityprog/

MAKE SURE MARK BOOKS ARE WELL-MAINTAINED

While not a resource in itself, a well-maintained mark book can provide an instant overview of a student's performance, which can be very useful when deciding if a student is currently in the correct set and also when discussing their performances at



parents' evenings. It is also an excellent way of tracking if a student has any outstanding pieces of work to complete and how they are performing in homework tasks.

USE MINI WHITEBOARDS

Mini whiteboards are invaluable to me as a teacher. If you're looking for an instant way to see who is still struggling to grasp a concept, whether it be grammatical or otherwise, make sure you have packs of mini whiteboards and marker pens to hand. Another tip: put them away as soon as they are no longer needed to prevent the temptation of doodling!

KEEP TIME MANAGEMENT ON TRACK

Any teacher will tell you, time management is crucial to maintaining your sanity. I have to admit, I've not always found this an easy task, especially with three children of my own. However, now I'm in my fourth year of teaching, I've realised I will never get it all done! What I do know is, children or no children, you need to carve out time for yourself. My top tips are:

- Take one day off at the weekend
- Maximise your usage of PPA time at school
- Create a marking schedule
- Don't mark for hours on end, take regular breaks – this should also improve the quality of your marking

BUILD BOUNDARIES

Established routines and boundaries are key. I am now in my third year of teaching some of my classes and their adoption of my rules and routines has been key to setting expectations and behaviour management. My school has a very effective behaviour management system and I make sure I enforce it consistently.

The link between effective behaviour management and progress is tangible. They may not say as much, but most students will silently thank you for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour quickly and decisively.

Mini whiteboards are a useful tool for assessing pupils' understanding



Remember, you're the expert and the best resource in the classroom

“An organised and stimulating classroom models high expectations to students and helps set a positive tone”

David Shanks, consultant and lead practitioner

and stimulating classroom models high expectations to students and helps set a positive tone. First, get the basics right – temperature, physical space, lighting, clear lines of sight to the front and a non-negotiable seating plan. Ensure you have all the stationery you need organised and labelled and check you have sufficient textbooks, exercise books, dictionaries etc. Ensure the class treat resources with respect. Showcase student work on the walls and explain the merits of the work. Have reference displays and laminated mats to support students (free online on TES). Display key verbs, conjunctions, tenses, phonics and refer to them as you teach. Provide students with a toolkit for making the target language the default language of the classroom. Bring culture into the classroom with trip photos, penpal letters, album covers and film artwork.



PROFILE

David Shanks

David Shanks works as a consultant and lead practitioner developing the MFL provision across the Harris Federation group of primary and secondary schools in London.

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

While it's important to get behaviour right from the get-go, being too draconian can backfire. Building positive relationships is key: be 'firm but fair'. Don't try to be 'down' with your students. Greet and talk with students out of lessons (ideally in the target language). Discuss students with those who've taught them or have pastoral responsibility for them. Be solution-focused and find out what helps students learn best. Liaise with your SEN Coordinator and read learning needs profiles carefully.

GET OFF TO A GOOD START

A good first lesson task can be to complete a short primary language survey to gauge what language/s students have studied at primary level, and give them a chance to show off what they might already know. What do they think of learning languages? Use their answers to inform your planning.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

It can be difficult to know when to take time out for yourself, but it's important to prioritise your own wellbeing and ensure you're healthy and rested. Play a sport, go to the cinema and have dinner with friends, family and colleagues regularly. Put dates in your calendar early to help you manage your workload in advance. For inspiration, follow #Teacher5aday.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Having a well-maintained, organised

A SIMPLE ROUTINE AND HOMEWORK

Train students to write the date in the target language while the lesson is starting. This can be extended to writing the time, weather and how they are feeling, and also completing the Q and A routine orally.

A nice first homework is for students to decorate their exercise book's cover with drawings, photos, quotations, music lyrics and key resources (numbers or key verbs) then cover them in sticky plastic. The only condition is that everything must be related to the L2 culture. Also ask students to create a contents page and number every page in digits and the full word.

DELIVER ACTIVITIES EFFICIENTLY

Some teachers can end up with excessively long PowerPoint slides and too many 'bitty' activities per lesson. Develop a toolkit of minimal preparation techniques and train your students to complete them effectively. Battleships, Noughts and Crosses, Quiz Trade, Who am I?, dictation, teacher-delivered listening and variation translation (tinyurl.com/tes-tips) are some of my favourites.

Sourced a good, authentic text? Exploit it for grammar, pronunciation, speaking and writing as well as reading comprehension. Model activities as a class then move on to pair work. Finally, remember that you're the best language resource in the room. Turn off the computer and avoid presentations becoming your master and crutch.

Let your pupils show off what they know

