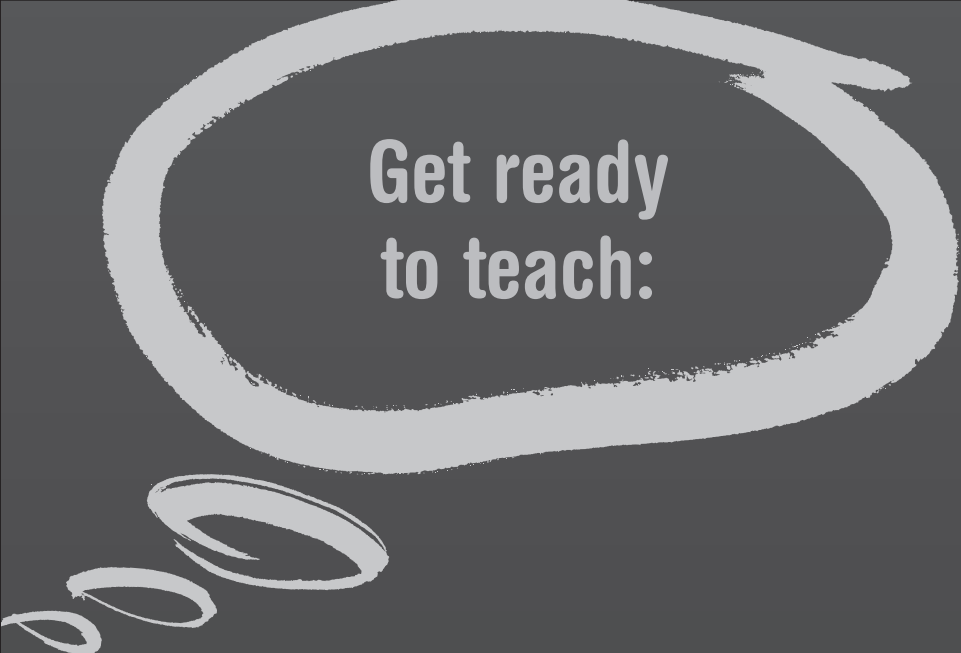# GET READY TO TEACH

A GUIDE FOR THE NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHER

VERITY LUSH

"... a 'Bible' for anyone who is just starting out in the profession"
Sarah Ranby, secondary school teacher

Get ready to teach:

A guide for the newly qualified teacher

Verity Lush

PEARSON
Longman

The librarians (and using the library)

Most schools now have decent libraries – or so we hope – even in the age of the internet. Often the library will also have some laptops or PCs available to the kids and you will be able to book whole lessons in there. It is therefore important to find out how to go about doing this and who is going to help you – namely, the librarian/s. Some may think it odd to include the librarians in the list of people you should meet, but this just goes to show how undervalued they can be within the school system.

The vast majority of school librarians take their jobs very seriously, and rightly so: the library is a fantastic resource, and apart from the obvious options of reading and taking books out, the students need to know how to research. Some schools have very exciting systems like fingerprint swiping, so you may need to go and get your digits swiped as soon as possible in order to be able to take books out yourself. You may even be able to ask the librarian to put aside 'book boxes' for you that you can take to your class or tutor group for them to use. One school I trained in had an amazing library, complete with seminar room and IT rooms attached, and you could book these separately. As a trainee I really made the most of that library – it was pretty devastating for all involved when near to the end of the summer term the roof collapsed on it due to a burst sewage pipe and deposited the contents of the girls' and boys' toilets on to the resources, the computers and the books, not to mention the heads of the attending librarians. It was through sheer luck that I wasn't in there at the time, and through sheer strength of will that I kept my warped sense of humour controlled when we were told about the situation in assembly the next day. The vision of a poo swinging, suspended in the air by a ceiling rafter, stays with me still.

Library staff (when not covered in raw sewage) are usually very willing to help you but do ensure that you keep control of any students you have down there and that they treat the place with

respect and are tidy and courteous. It's worth making a trip down to the library and introducing yourself. Familiarise yourself with the surroundings and what's available.

The IT department or technicians

Due to the fact that we now teach in an age where we use laptops, interactive whiteboards, VLEs and so on, it is important to find the IT department or technicians because if (when) something goes wrong with any of these pieces of equipment, they

> **tip** One hurdle that I've found over the years is that either your own immaturity does not disappear the second you leave school yourself, or it's somehow reactivated by being around the kids. Best of all we expect them to control theirs whilst occasionally bursting with silent mirth ourselves. You will need to practise your best poker face for when situations such as the Poo in the Library occur – or rather, for when you are meant to look stern in assembly. The kids themselves appreciate nothing more in teachers than a good sense of humour.

will be able to help you. Some schools now run everything on one network, including registration systems and so on, which can be a real pain when it all collapses – indeed, it can feel as though your entire day has gone down the pan. This does of course lend weight to the suggestion that it is best to ensure that all your lessons are backed up with old-fashioned paper resources and plans, especially in a primary school, where very often outside help needs to be called in to fix any problems. My current school recently held a conference where the Lead Practitioner for E-Learning was meant to give a presentation that involved using a virtual world that has been set up online for kids. He planned to show the assorted head teachers and other visitors just what was possible using technology. Alas, just as he

joked that the system probably wouldn't work at all, the projector petered out, the technology failed and he just had to describe it instead. This is where a cry for help to the tech guys is needed, so find out where they are and befriend them immediately!

Many secondary schools now are trialling Year 7 laptop schemes. Each student in Year 7 will have a laptop for which their parents pay, for example, £5 a week. These payments continue until Year 9, when the laptop becomes their property. An issue

> **tip** A 'VLE' is a Virtual Learning Environment – and most schools will now have one or will be in the process of setting one up. You will be trained on how to get the best out of the VLE and you will be expected to contribute to it. It's a bit like having a web page – you can do things like set up forums for your classes or get them to do blogs or wikis. Check with your mentor or HoD.

here of course is those whose parents cannot afford to spend an extra £20 a month per child or who do not wish to. In this case, schools generally have some kind of 'bank' of spare laptops that teachers can book out for those students who do not have their own. SoW are supposed to incorporate a certain percentage of laptop use and departments must ensure that the technology actually enhances learning more than if the students did not have it. Therefore using the laptop as a word processor is not good enough: you need to be savvy with whatever VLE systems or similar the school has in place (Moodle and Sharepoint are examples). You may take issue here with the implications for handwriting and literacy, but whatever your own view you need to really know what you're doing if you'll be expected not only to teach your own subject but to also be relatively au fait with several IT systems. These are generally very easy skills to pick up and can

make lessons very engaging. Training should be provided and it should be ongoing – if it is not sufficient, then don't be afraid to ask. You've been employed to teach and you should be given the opportunity to do so to the best of your ability.

A first-day checklist

Somewhere, in amongst all of this, the school will of course actually open up to the kids. Whether you have INSETs first or not, eventually there will

> **tip** Chances are you'll have already met your class or tutor group during a day in June/July that the school invited you to, like an induction. In this case, you may feel a little more prepared.

be children in the place at some point during this week and you will be able to begin to do what you were employed for. In a secondary school you may find that you get another few days that are relatively quiet. Very often Year 7 will be back a day before anyone else, although Year 11 may also arrive on this day. Depending, then, on your timetable you may still not have to teach just yet. If you don't, then thank your lucky stars and use the time to prepare. If you do, or if you are a primary teacher, then it's full steam ahead from now until October half-term. The following are the main issues for your first few teaching days. After the first week or two you'll find yourself in a sudden rhythm and everything will become clearer. So, first of all, a basic checklist:

The top ten things to have at the ready:

1 Have a list at hand of your class or tutor group.

2 Make sure you know when the first assemblies are and what information you must give to your class or tutor group.

3 Ensure that you know your timetable and what you need to teach and where you are teaching.

4 Have your diary up to date by now with important dates and warnings written in ahead of time for things like reports and so on.

5 Find out about and be confident with registration systems.

6 Have your first week planned.

7 Know what the school's sanctions and rewards system is and be prepared to use it immediately.

8 Know how the technology in your room works.

9 Know where any equipment is that you need to give the students.

10 Know who to call if you need to call anyone and how to do so – often there will be a telephone system, so find out where the phones are. (There should also be a list of extension numbers next to it.)

Now, this may seem like a lot to do but it really is a **basic** checklist. Your room by now should be sorted out, whether you did it in the hols or you've been staying after school, and you should have been given your share of stationery and so on by another member in your year team or by your HoD if you are in a secondary school. During the meetings at the start of term or on the INSET day you will have been given information regarding start-of-term arrangements with the kids, so make sure you have them to hand – this will detail whether or not they have assemblies that you need to be at and take them to and so on, and you'll have to be ultra-prepared and organised.

Aside from that (as if it wasn't enough), let's have a look at some of the basics in a little more detail.

◯ Your class or tutor group

This can be very exciting as well as nerve racking: these are the students that you will encounter more than any others as you'll be seeing them on a regular basis. **Very** regular if you are a primary teacher!

Whether you have had to go elsewhere in the school to greet them or whether they have come straight to your room, there will be a moment very soon when you will have to introduce yourself for the first time. Over the page are some ideas on how to begin building a relationship with them.

Information for your class or tutor group

Generally on a first day back there is a lot of admin to get through. It will help you to have a folder (a big one) to collate this info and collect pastoral information in. You will usually have been given a vast amount of paperwork already (not so much to pass on, of course, if you are teaching very young children) and will need to ensure that you're giving things out on time and getting them back in. For this reason it can help to have several **class lists** printed in advance, even if your registers are on your laptop. This way, you will be able to tick off who has been given what and who has handed what back in. Undoubtedly you'll then need to pass these bits on to other people, and various kids will have missed the deadline. Cover your back by being organised from the start because before you know it they'll be telling you that you didn't hand it out in the first place – and you'll be so tired that **you'll believe them**!

In a secondary school in particular you are very likely to have been handed a great pile of **homework diaries** to give out – and as tutor you may well need to sign these once a week and ensure that parents have done so too. Keep up to date with this: believe it or not, some parents do actually complain to schools that their