

THE ART OF BEING A

BRILLIANT NOT



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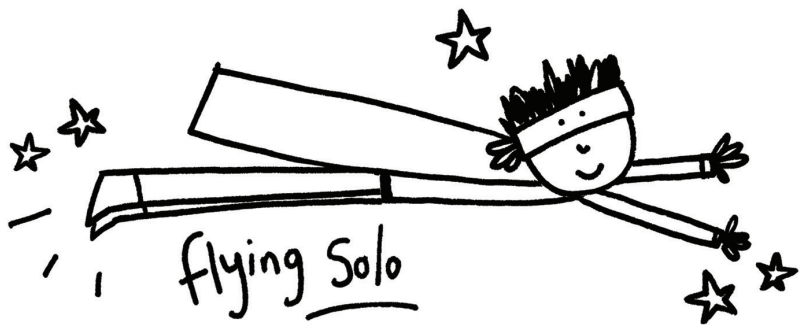
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flying Solo

Chapter 3



You have arrived. You have made it. This is the day you have dreamed of – your first day flying solo. The day you arrive in your new school for the beginning of term will be completely different to your visit to the school in preparation for this momentous day. You will no longer be wearing an ID badge which says 'Visitor'. As soon as the admin team can get you photographed, you will have a badge which bears your name. Having been known by your first name or even a nickname all the way through university, now you are Mr, Mrs or Miss You have arrived. You have grown up.

There will be other potent reminders that you are now a fully signed up member of staff. You will have a pigeon hole in the staffroom. Yes, indeed, the world is truly now your footstool! Don't be misled into thinking that this is an unreservedly good thing – it also means all manner of people can now communicate with you and expect you to do things – but let us enjoy the moment for now. It signifies status.

The boost to your nervous ego will not stop there. You will almost certainly be entrusted with keys. These may enable entry and security to your own room or, if you are

extra privileged, you may be given a master key which enables you to gain access to anywhere in the building. Yes, folks, this is proper responsibility!

In the course of the day, you should be provided with access codes, passwords and usernames for the school computer systems, which will open up yet further corridors of investigation. And if you want one more indicator that you have finally arrived, have a quick look at a timetable. Before today, your predecessor's initials will have been emblazoned on the timetable against your classes. Even worse, it may have said something along the lines of 'AN Other Maths Teacher' as the exciting news of your appointment was awaited. Now it will bear your initials. There is absolutely no doubt - you are a proper teacher at last.

We are going to divert for one moment to offer a wider homily on an NQT's feelings on this first day of term. It would be perfectly normal and expected for you to feel excited, nervous, proud, daunted ... a whole cocktail of different emotions. A true teacher looks forward to the beginning of every term and every school year.

TOP TIP

If ever you find yourself dreading the beginning of term, jump ship. You are doing the wrong thing with your life, and you are not doing yourself or the children any favours. It may be the wrong school or the wrong career, but it's a decision that has to be made.

Yes, yes, yes, when the alarm goes off on that first morning at some ungodly hour, which you haven't seen for six or more weeks, dragging yourself from the warmth of your duvet and the comfort of Morpheus can seem less than desirable, but once you are up and running you should be anticipating with relish the chance to meet new children. Your creative juices should be flowing on how to engage your pupils with the content and skills you love. You should be considering the possibilities for this year's school play or a school trip in the summer. The school calendar is a kaleidoscope of activity with its own rhythm and milestones: Harvest Festival becomes Halloween becomes Diwali becomes Remembrance becomes Christmas, and so it goes on. As teachers, this offers us a priceless opportunity to influence and change lives.

In all probability, you will start with an INSET or training day. This is a huge bonus! You will almost certainly take some stick from friends who are not teachers throughout your career about long holidays, finishing at 3 p.m.

and training days. Get used to it. Smile! Ask them why they aren't teachers if they think it's so cushy. Invite them to shadow you for a day. Usually they will say, 'Oh, I couldn't be a teacher! I would throttle them before breaktime!' Game, set and match to you. The favourite jibe is, 'You've just had six weeks' holiday. Why don't you have the training days in the holiday?' The answer is, 'We do. The five training days are in addition to the 195 days of term time when we deliver lessons.'

Make good use of the training day. But beware: it is no easy ride and you will go home with your head spinning. Nonetheless, it is a great way to find your feet for a day before the children arrive. You will almost certainly have a series of meetings, which will be quite intimidating for you because everyone else will seem to know what they are doing and you will be feeling very green. Don't be deceived. It's just an illusion that they all know what they are doing. And don't feel you have to be life and soul of the party - just soak up as much as you possibly can. You will never remember all of it, but you will know a thousand times more at the end of the day than you did when you arrived nervously at 8 a.m.

So, down to practicalities. On your preliminary visit in the term before you took up your post you should have come away with your timetable, the timings of the school day, your class lists and supplementary information about key children in your class, an idea of what you will be teaching first and how it fits into the overall scheme of learning. You are going to be feverishly busy in the first few days of term, so you will have been very wise if you have prepared your first series of lessons

before the training day. It will be a massive plus for you to have those first lessons, plus the resources you need, in your locker before hostilities begin.

TOP TIPS

FOR WHAT TO FIND OUT ON TRAINING DAY

- ◆ Do you have to do a playground duty? When? Where? What exactly is expected? What about after school? Do you have to do a bus duty? What about lunchtime? In most schools you are not obliged to do lunchtime duties, but there may be a scheme to pay staff who volunteer. Find out!
- ◆ When do teachers have meetings? Dates? How long do they last? Where? Are there meetings before school? Which days?
- ◆ When are assemblies? How do they work? What are the expectations?
- ◆ Where are resources kept? How do you get photocopies done? Where will you find exercise books, folders, paper and other stationery?
- ◆ What are the requirements for marking?

- ◆ Who is your ITT tutor during your NQT year? What will your training involve? When will you have meetings? When will you be observed? What records do you need to keep? How will you use the ten per cent extra time that you will be granted on the timetable?
- ◆ What should you do if you are ill? Who should you ring? When?
- ◆ What should you do if you need to leave the premises during the school day? What is the system for signing out? What are your contracted times?

You may not find definitive answers to all of these questions immediately, but these issues should be on your tick list, starting with training day.

There are two other areas which you also need to start to familiarise yourself with: school rules and sanctions. There should be a staff handbook which will give you a comprehensive overview of the school rules. You probably won't have time on the training day to get your head around all of them, but you do need a synopsis. If in doubt, ask. In particular, you would benefit from knowing what is the expectation in terms of uniform, make-up and jewellery. What about coats and bags? What do the students do if it is wet before school, at breaktime or at lunchtime? What about mobile phones and other electronic devices?

Every school will have its own protocol on these matters, so ascertain what the regime is in your school. Also find out about the currency of rewards in the school. Are there systems of stickers, commendations, merits, texts home or gold stars? As we will explain in Chapter 5, praise is much more powerful than criticism if you want to achieve improved behaviour and effort. You need to find out how it works in your school.

Equally, you need to know how the sanctions system works. What should you do if you have a naughty child? What is the system for referring the child to a colleague, head of department or senior member of staff? What paper trails are involved? Are they done on a centralised computer system or in paper form? What about detentions? At breaktime? At lunchtime? After school? We will describe discipline in greater detail in Chapter 4. At the moment, we are dealing with the first few days. You just need to know what basic structures and strategies are in place.

Then there's you! You are the most important person in all of this. Forget being terribly magnanimous for a moment, we are going to talk about *you*. The most important obligation every employer has is to ensure that you are safe in your place of employment. You should receive a full induction into the school's safeguarding procedures. These are designed to guarantee the safety of employees and children alike. They are absolutely essential, and they cover some murky aspects of human behaviour. But as is highlighted all too often in the media, when these things go wrong, the effects on young people can be catastrophic.

TOP TIP

Safeguarding is a vital issue. Always pass on a disclosure from a child to the relevant individual.

Safeguarding should be taken extremely seriously and you should be given an in-depth introduction right at the beginning of your time at the school, often on a training day. You should then be aware of the possible dangers and also of what to do if you are confronted by a situation which has made your antennae quiver in the knowledge that something is wrong, either with a child or a colleague. The key thing to bear in mind is that under no circumstances do you keep a secret. If a child tells you something that is clearly of concern, you *must* pass it on, no matter how much the child begs you not to. It is in the child's best interest and also your own. There will be a designated individual in your school in charge of safeguarding and it is to that person you should turn if you receive a disclosure.

Make sure you know the procedures for a fire evacuation. Where is the nearest exit door to where you teach? Where is the closest fire assembly point? What happens at breaktime or lunchtime? What are you expected to do? As part of the school's security system there may be security codes on doors. You may need to know how to access these rooms so ask someone to give you the code.

Social media forums are here to stay. Being able to communicate with our friends and family instantly in a variety of ways is a part of modern life. But beware! You are now a professional person, so be very wary about what you put out there for public consumption. What may have been very amusing on holiday in the summer or at the rugby club at the weekend doesn't look so clever if your employer or the children you teach come across it. You now need to be extremely discreet about what is out there. If in doubt, don't!

Furthermore, you should also keep your professional life away from the social media – we know of schools where people have lost their jobs because of imprudent comments. If you engage in dialogue about school matters in open forums, you are likely to receive a very serious reprimand from your head teacher and governors. What happens in school stays in school; what happens in your private life is private. Keep it that way. Under no circumstances enter into communication with children on social media sites. If you want them to email their homework to you, they can do this using your school email address or virtual learning environment. Nothing else!

TOP TIP

What happens in school stays in school; what happens in your private life is private.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE SECRETS OF BEING A BRILLIANT NQT, READ ON ...

Here's everything you need to know to be a brilliant NQT including the big stuff: interviewing, finding the right job, career development; the day-to-day stuff: preparing outstanding lessons, getting involved in school life, taking trips, marking, assemblies; the challenging stuff: dealing with workload, dealing with discipline, dealing with parents, dealing with colleagues, pastoral care and being a form tutor; and the brilliant stuff: realising you can handle all of this and more when you learn the art of being a brilliant NQT.

The underlying message is blindingly simple. Why settle for anything less than being yourself, brilliantly?

A BRILLIANT BOOK FOR NQTS

'I was delighted to review *The Art of Being a Brilliant Teacher* and even more delighted that this has been extended to *The Art of Being A Brilliant NQT*. They are the teachers who have to learn fast and this is a book that will really help them to do this.'

David Cameron, The Real David Cameron Ltd



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