

# Life as an Early Career Teacher



**Cassie Triggs**  
Languages

Twelve months ago, when we were exhausted from teaching just six lessons a week, we would never have believed it possible that a year later we would be getting used to an almost full teaching timetable, along with the additional demands of teacher life such as staff meetings, parents' evenings, and dealing with pastoral issues.

A personal highlight was meeting my tutor group for the first time (in my case Y7). Watching them anxiously looking round the hall in the morning, but enthusiastically bounding out to their parents and carers at the end of the school day was extremely rewarding. It also reminded me that I wasn't the only one in a new school, making new friends and learning the ropes.

Being left in charge of my own classes, I have found myself frequently reflecting on discussions and ideas we shared at university last year during lectures, seminars, and in our departmental cohort. Discussions such as those about marking policies, how we engage (and embrace) the less confident learners, and how we reflect all diversity in our teaching, are now questions I face on a daily basis. I have enjoyed being able to go back to tips, hints and ideas we shared last year and try them out in my classroom.

I may be the most exhausted I have ever been (and don't see that changing much in this year of firsts), but I can honestly say that I have never felt more rewarded by my work!



**Piers Plowman**  
PE

Since the start of my first teaching post in September this year, I have looked back on the many moments of learning I took away from my PGCE year. St Mary's University pushed me to become the best ECT teacher I could be for the start of what would become one of the toughest jobs I have ever faced.

My school is a lovely community of teachers that have shown such amazing support to me as an ECT. The experience so far has been fast paced and always committed to the school values of developing a culture of learning and ambition. If I compare my placement to this first official post, I would have to say that the level of responsibility has grown exponentially! The number of classes I teach, my tutor group, ECT training and Duke of Edinburgh coordination has definitely been a shock to the system but St Mary's definitely taught me the strength of resilience and how to maintain the best balance I can.

My advice to trainee teachers going through their placement now is trust the process and become comfortable with the uncomfortable in teaching. The more you experience the better it will prepare you for the coming years. Just go for it!

## Professional Subject Associations

Remember that there are a number of useful professional subject associations to support the development of your teaching.

Here are just a few examples:

**English:**  
National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) and the UK Literacy Association (UKLA)

**Geography:**  
Geographical Association (GA)

**History:**  
Historical Association (HA)

**Mathematics:**  
Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM)

**Modern Languages:**  
Association for Language Learning (ALL)

**Physical Education:**  
Association for PE (AfPE)

**Religious Education:**  
National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)

**Science:**  
The Association for Science Education (ASE)



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# EARLY CAREER TEACHER NEWSLETTER 2021/22

NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2022 ISSUE



Welcome to the 2021/22 Early Career Teacher Newsletter. In the current and ongoing COVID-19 circumstances, one thing is certain – your Early Career Teacher year will be one to remember!

We hope that you are keeping safe and well in your different situations, and your first term was a successful one. This newsletter is intended to give you a few updates from St Mary's Institute of Education, share some ideas and news, as well as some CPD opportunities which may be of interest to you and your colleagues.

Our alumni are always our best ambassadors and we thank you for continuing to promote teacher training at St Mary's.

You may be interested to read about a couple of our former trainees who are thriving as Early Career Teachers.

We hope to see our PGCE alumni at Graduation events scheduled for March, this year. However, due to COVID, plans may alter and so please stay alert to any communications from the University for updates on what will be taking place.

Whenever the Graduation event takes place, we look forward to celebrating your achievements in style – it will certainly be a special event. Please keep in touch with your tutors at St Mary's – we love to hear from you! We would also encourage you to follow us on Twitter @TeachStMarys.

St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

Institute of  
Education



## CONTACTS AT A GLANCE

**Programme Lead: Jim Moreland**  
james.moreland@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, English: Fiona Wilson**  
fiona.wilson@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, Geography: Sophie Wilson**  
sophie.wilson@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, Mathematics: Jane Moss and Nigel Wills**  
jane.moss@stmarys.ac.uk  
nigel.wills@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, PE: Kirsty Harding**  
kirsty.harding@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, RE: Matthew Dell**  
matthew.dell@stmarys.ac.uk

**Course Lead, Science: Rob Campbell**  
robert.campbell@stmarys.ac.uk

**Head of Secondary and Lifelong Learning: Jane Chambers**  
jane.chambers@stmarys.ac.uk

**Head of Partnerships: Eleanor Student**  
eleanor.steward@stmarys.ac.uk

# Workload and Wellbeing as Early Career Teachers

During your teacher training programme, you will have focused on managing workload and wellbeing. This is often easier to talk about than to put into practice, and particularly with the challenges of such uncertain times. Thriving (more than surviving!) as an Early Career Teacher (ECT) can sometimes feel a little like an uphill battle and so it is important to balance your own wellbeing alongside your busy teaching role, not least because of the positive impact a well-balanced teacher has on the learning of children and young people in your care.

## Three top tips for your wellbeing

### 1. As much as teaching is a vocation, learn to say 'no' every now and then

ECTs are often enthusiastic and want to be involved in lots of different aspects of school life, including creative online teaching and learning resources. Of course, this is a great way to feel part of your school community but, on occasion, it may be better to step aside from a new initiative until you are confident in managing your current workload well.

**2. Remember to review your 'to do' list on a regular basis.** Just five minutes of reviewing a long list can save time in the long run. Check your list and categorise, using the urgent vs important grid above to regain a sense of priorities.

**3. Try to 'clock off' at a sensible time each evening and for part of the weekend at least.** Only you can decide how this will work best in your situation, but make a clear decision and then stick to it. You may find that you work more efficiently at other times as a result.



# Postgraduate Study in Education

We would be delighted to welcome you back on our postgraduate courses in Education. We offer a range of well-established courses designed to meet your professional needs as your career develops, enabling you to apply your learning to your practice, using your knowledge to drive effective change, while critically engaging with contemporary educational debates as practitioner researchers.

These include:  
 MA Education with specialist pathways in Coaching and Mentoring; Inclusive Practice; Leading Innovation and Change; Pedagogy; Physical Education and Religious Education. We also offer PG Certs in Coaching and Mentoring and SEN Coordination (National Award) and MAs in Catholic School Leadership, Education, Culture and Society and Education: International Development and Social Justice.

Teaching takes place on Saturdays (monthly), or fortnightly twilight sessions in person or via videoconferencing.

Further details are available on St Mary's website:

**Education MA | Flexible Master's degree for teachers ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

**Catholic School Leadership: Principles & Practice ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

**Education, Culture and Society | Postgraduate degree, London ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

**Education, International Development and Social Justice ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

**Coaching and Mentoring PG Cert | Great CPD for teachers ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

**SENCO course, London Special Educational Needs Coordination ([stmarys.ac.uk](http://stmarys.ac.uk))**

Those with up to 90 Level 7 credits from a PGCE will be exempt from some modules. Remember that these credits will only be accepted as accredited prior learning for five years from completion of the PGCE.

If you have any queries or would like any more information, please contact Course Lead: [Matthew.Dell@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:Matthew.Dell@stmarys.ac.uk)

**PG Certificate**  
 National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination Exciting new programme for SENCOs and aspiring SENCOs  
 PG Certificate in Mentoring and Coaching  
 An excellent programme for all mentors in schools, particularly those working with the new ITT Core Content Framework and/or the Early Career Framework.

For more information, contact Course Lead: [catherine.carrol@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.carrol@stmarys.ac.uk)

**The Institute of Education at St Mary's values CCRS as part of its provision. CCRS originated at St Mary's and is the only course accredited by the Bishops of England and Wales.**

St Mary's provides the largest cohorts for CCRS each year and recent developments (including blended provision) ensure a wider reach for CCRS beyond the student body at St Mary's.

This is an exciting development as we continue to uphold the missional foundation of the University.

For more information: [www.stmarys.ac.uk/short-courses/catholic-education/ccrs.aspx](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/short-courses/catholic-education/ccrs.aspx)

Course Lead contact: [karen.north@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:karen.north@stmarys.ac.uk)

# Epistemic Insights into big questions!



Science alumni among you will know St Mary's University is a consortium member of the LASAR Epistemic Insight project. This project is a collaboration of 13 Universities that seeks to support teachers and school children appreciate the distinctiveness of individual disciplines. Epistemic Insight refers to how we as teachers and our pupils work with subject knowledge and how different disciplines offer can work together to find answers to life's big questions. It is innovative work for as Billingsley, Taber, Riga and Newdick's (2013) research indicates, subject teachers rarely work collaboratively. Consequently, this can lead us to reject subject perspectives which otherwise would help us tackle real world problems such as global warming or the Covid pandemic.

Over the last two years the RE and Science trainee teachers have been part of a pilot study introducing epistemic insight into the curriculum. In the summer of 2021 St Mary's was awarded funding to expand the provision of epistemic insight to include a series of four lectures on the professional studies modules.

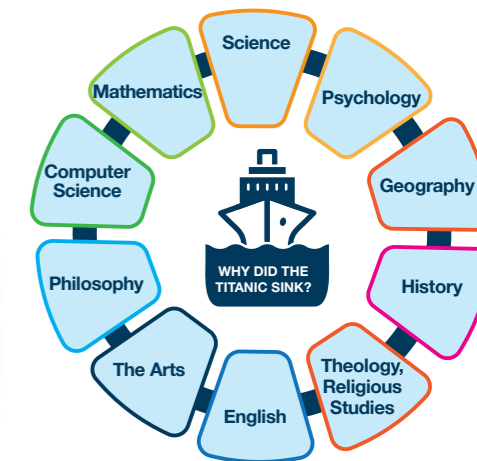


**Figure 1 The bubble tool** This is used to group questions according to how easily they can be answered by competing a scientific experiment.

This project is one sub project of a £2 million research project which introduces epistemic insight into initial teacher education.

Pleasingly, our own research seems to suggest that modelling collaborative teaching supports trainee teachers recognise how a wider range of disciplines can answer big questions (Billingsley, Campbell and Dell 2020). Epistemic Insight seeks to solve that problem by supporting teachers appreciate what makes a question amenable to their own discipline. Tools such as the Bubble Tool and Discipline Wheel (figures 1 and 2) can be used to articulate how disciplinary knowledge from a wide range of disciplines can inform the answer to big, real-world problems.

More recently, back in November, St Mary's University hosted the Epistemic Insight Consortium event. This event showcased the wide diversity of work on Epistemic insight Consortium. Speakers from Leeds Trinity University, Christchurch Canterbury University, University of Hill and St Mary's University shared their experience of introducing epistemic insight into the Primary and Secondary



**Figure 2 The discipline wheel** This tool can be used in two ways, either giving the pupils the list of disciplines that can inform an answer to the central big question, or by giving students a blank wheel and asking them which disciplines they would use to answer the central question.

Initial teacher Education. Further input a local headteacher shared experience of introducing a curriculum informed by epistemic insight into their year 7 teaching.

The recordings of each of the talks are available to view at [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ZoG7zq-ZvmY79UJ59whlz\\_KL\\_N4o5i](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ZoG7zq-ZvmY79UJ59whlz_KL_N4o5i)

Looking ahead, St Mary's University are hosting the annual epistemic insight conference on 23rd and 24th June 2022. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Rob Campbell Senior Lecturer in science education via email at [Robert.campbell@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:Robert.campbell@stmarys.ac.uk)

**References**  
 Billingsley, B., Campbell, R and Dell, M (2020) Epistemic insight promoting collaborative teaching between science and RE teachers. *School science review*, 102(379), pp.54-58.  
 Billingsley, B., Taber, K., Riga, F. and Newdick, H. (2013) Secondary School Students' Epistemic Insight into the Relationships Between Science and Religion—A Preliminary Enquiry. *Research in Science Education* 43(4), pp. 1715–1732, DOI: 10.1007/s11165-012-9317-y

