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Getting into Primary Teaching

David Owen Cathy Burnett
Series Editor Andrew J. Hobson
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David Owen and Cathy Burnett

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Meet the editors

Andrew J Hobson is Professor of Education and Head of Education Research at the University of Brighton. He has previously been a teacher and mentor to newly qualified teachers. His research is concerned with the professional learning and development of trainees and more experienced teachers.

David Owen taught in primary, secondary and residential environmental education settings before working at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) as a teacher educator. He led the primary and early years programme at SHU for seven years before taking up the role of Head of the Department of Teacher Education. His research has focused on geographical education, e-learning and teacher education course development. He has worked closely with the Geographical Association and on a range of teacher education projects and was, until recently, a member of the editorial team for the Primary Geographer journal.

Cathy Burnett worked as an actor-teacher, primary teacher and literacy consultant before working in initial teacher education. She has been involved in supporting the initial and continuing development of teachers for many years. She has published a wide range of book chapters and journal articles with a particular focus on literacy education, new technologies and becoming a teacher. She is particularly interested in investigating classroom practices and in understanding the connections between learning in and out of school. She is currently co-editor of the United Kingdom Literacy Association journal, Literacy.
All of the contributing authors work at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) in the Department of Teacher Education.

Jane Bartholomew is a senior lecturer in education. She is a trainee support tutor for the early years and primary courses and also leads a third year module. This focuses on developing trainees’ confidence in the selection of planning approaches and reflects her interest in enquiry and learning skills. She is particularly interested in how teachers can promote effective learners through focusing on attitudes and cross-curricular skills.

Naomi Cooper is a senior lecturer on the primary BA and PGCE courses. She teaches on a variety of primary education modules and lead on English as an additional language and RE. As year leader for the third year of the BA course she liaises with students, staff and outside agencies in a number of different areas. Her research at Master’s level related to inclusion of marginalised groups, including those with Special Educational Needs.

Karen Daniels is a senior lecturer in English. Her main duties are teaching on both undergraduate and postgraduate English modules with a focus on language and literacy in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. She is currently the subject leader for English.

Adrian Fearn is a senior lecturer in primary and early years education. He teaches mathematics and professional studies modules on all the BA and PGCE courses. As a university link tutor, he works in partnership with schools in the Sheffield region to support trainees’ professional development while on school placements.

Janet Goepel was a teacher for many years and developed an interest in Special Educational Needs through having children with additional needs in her classes. She has taught children with profound and multiple learning difficulties who otherwise would have had to attend a special school, as well as those with dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and social difficulties. She is now a senior lecturer teaching inclusion at SHU and hopes to pass on her passion for inclusive practice to trainee teachers.

Julia Myers is a principal lecturer and primary and early years staff group lead. She joined the English team at SHU in 2000 and became English subject leader from 2009 to 2011. For several years she has been involved in a variety of LTA (Learning, Teaching and Assessment) projects, including the development of feedback on students’ academic work, and since 2011 has been the lead for LTA within the Department of Teacher Education.

Sarah Williams is a senior lecturer and Year 2 course leader on the BA primary and early years teacher education course and primary physical education specialist. She
Meet the authors

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has spent the last ten years working with primary and secondary schools in Sheffield developing opportunities within PE and school sport. She currently teaches undergraduate and postgraduate trainees and supports a number of professional development programmes for teachers.
This book provides you with an expert, comprehensive and up-to-date account of the process of getting into primary school teaching. It will be a particularly invaluable source of guidance for those of you who are about to embark upon the process of becoming a teacher, or who are considering doing so. Such a decision must not be taken lightly, and it is essential that you are prepared for what lies ahead. The experience of learning to teach – whether in primary, secondary or further education – is, like teaching itself, extremely challenging and invariably involves both delightful highs and distressing lows (Bullough, 2009, p 34), associated with feelings of enjoyment, excitement, hope, satisfaction and reward on the one hand, and vulnerability, fear, frustration, humiliation and despair on the other (Bullough, 2009; Hobson et al, 2009)! The process of becoming a primary school teacher, and doing so in the second decade of the twenty-first century – whether in England or further afield – poses its particular challenges.

Such challenges, and means of meeting and overcoming them, are a major focus of this text, and are very familiar to its editors and chapter authors. Among them, these writers boast decades of experience of working as primary teachers and leaders, of preparing (supporting, educating and training) new primary teachers, and of supporting the professional learning and development of more experienced teachers of primary school children. They are expert practitioners and teacher educators, subject specialists, and include nationally and internationally renowned researchers in their respective fields.

As well as their own considerable knowledge and experience, the authors also draw on the latest research and on the recent experiences and ‘voices’ of primary school pupils, teachers, head teachers and student teachers to help explain key aspects of learning to become – and being – a primary school teacher. This, together with the use of real life examples and the reflective tasks provided, makes Getting into Primary Teaching an interesting, informative and enjoyable read.

In keeping with the underlying principles of its publisher, Getting into Primary Teaching urges readers to develop (or develop further) an informed critical approach to teaching, learning, education and their own professional development. This is important because your development as a critically reflective practitioner will enable you to continue to learn – both from experience and other sources – in order to become and then remain a good or excellent teacher. It is important to recognise that this will not happen overnight. Teaching is much more than learning and ‘delivering’ a body of knowledge, and becoming an excellent teacher requires much more than being apprenticed to, in order to learn from, an existing excellent teacher. Among other things, it also requires:

- **understanding** – for example, of how pupils learn, of how different pupils learn in different ways, of various barriers to learning which different pupils experience to different degrees, and of means of potentially overcoming such barriers;
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- the discovery and development of a teacher identity;
- the discovery and development of your personal and unique approach(es) to teaching and facilitating learning;
- continual evaluation and adaptation of such approaches for different learners in different contexts; and
- the development of resilience and mental strength, to enable you ‘bounce back’ from the inevitable lows associated with becoming and being a teacher, and to cope with frequent changes to the curriculum and with the intense degree of scrutiny to which teachers’ work is currently subject in England and some other educational systems, which Pat Mahony and colleagues have (rightly in my view) termed surveillance overkill (Mahony et al, 2004, p 440).

Getting into Primary Teaching addresses all of these important matters, while providing invaluable insights into a range of other key concerns pertinent to becoming a primary school teacher, including:

- what it is like to be a primary teacher and what it means to be a professional;
- how to successfully apply for a place on different types of initial teacher preparation programmes (commonly but simplistically termed ‘teacher training’);
- the teaching of English and mathematics;
- meeting the needs of all learners (Special Educational Needs and inclusion);
- planning and implementing a creative curriculum; and
- placing learning at the centre of your journey towards becoming a qualified teacher.

I trust that you will learn much from the following chapters, and that they in turn will help you to learn much from your subsequent experience of becoming a teacher, should you choose to embark upon this potentially treacherous yet exciting and hugely rewarding career choice.

Andrew J Hobson, 2014

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Acknowledgements
This book will support your application to be a primary school teacher and will help you develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to gain preparatory experience in a school and become a successful teacher. The authors of each chapter have all been successful primary teachers and have worked with many student teachers in initial teacher education, as well as supporting the continuing professional development of more experienced teachers. It is worth noting that, while much of the advice contained in this book will be relevant to those interested in teaching in various contexts, sections on policy and curriculum frameworks focus primarily on England. On occasion we do invite you to consider alternative frameworks in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Each chapter of the book has the following learning features to help you engage with the topics that are explored.

Reflective tasks: these are activities, questions and stimuli for thinking about teaching. They will help you actively engage with research extracts, case studies and examples from schools that are provided.

Pupil/teacher/student voice: these case studies give you the opportunity to hear directly from pupils, trainee teachers and qualified teachers. You will have the opportunity to talk with such people on school placements during your initial teacher preparation programme, but this feature collects a wider range of views than can be found in a single school or small number of schools. These scenarios and classroom examples are also the basis for many of the reflective tasks.

Research focus: here you are introduced to important research projects that have helped shape primary education.

Jargon busters: do you know your NCTL from your NASBTT? Your summative from your formative assessment? Primary education is full of jargon and acronyms, and this feature explains and demystifies phrases you may hear in a school or read in a primary school curriculum textbook. Words highlighted are included in jargon buster sections at the end of each chapter.

Taking it further: want to find out more about the issues discussed in each chapter? Follow up the accessible web-links and books explained in this section.
Progress checklist: use this list to systematically prepare for an application for a primary course. Each chapter will give you the opportunity to audit your understanding and develop your knowledge.

In Chapter 2, Cathy Burnett draws on teachers’ stories to explore the nature of teaching in the twenty-first century. She highlights the varied roles that teachers are expected to fulfil and the rewards, opportunities and challenges associated with these. Cathy introduces the idea of ‘professionalism’ and explores how teachers work alongside others, including parents/carers and other members of the local community, and colleagues in schools and in multi-agency teams. She describes the different contexts in which teachers work and introduces the range of career opportunities available to those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). You are encouraged to reflect on the skills, knowledge and experience you might bring to teaching and to consider how values and beliefs are significant to how teachers teach and the kinds of experiences they provide.

In Chapter 3, David Owen provides practical guidance on making an application for an initial teacher preparation programme. While recognising that recruitment requirements and procedures vary between routes and institutions, he outlines key elements of the applications process: learning from school experience; writing a personal statement; evidencing subject knowledge in English and mathematics; preparation for, and taking, the skills tests; resilience and professionalism; understanding the application process; and success in individual and group interviews. The chapter provides guidance on writing applications and preparing for interviews and draws on personal accounts by admissions tutors and head teachers.

Chapter 4 (also written by David Owen) explores how you learn to become a teacher. It introduces the National Curriculum in England (DfE, 2013) and gives details of the curriculum arrangements in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Teaching is a commonplace activity but can be difficult to explain, so the chapter reviews beliefs about teaching and how these beliefs influence types of teacher preparation programmes. It introduces the concept of the reflective practitioner and reviews approaches to reflection you can use as an adult learner. A common thread within any teacher preparation programme is the need to meet the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) and these are reviewed and explained alongside the roles of school-based mentors and host class teachers.

In Chapter 5, Karen Daniels and Julia Myers explore the nature of subject knowledge in English and how this is relevant to your teaching. They begin by explaining the nature and centrality of language and literacy in daily life and present examples of children’s use of literacy in their lives beyond the classroom. They then examine the changing nature of literacy and the impact of digital technologies on our understanding of what is meant by reading, writing and texts. Karen and Julia present an overview of aspects of children’s development in speaking and listening, reading and writing over the primary years. They describe current approaches to the teaching of English and illustrate these with examples of classroom practice and commentary from experienced classroom practitioners. The role of children’s literature and approaches to teaching early reading, including phonics, are also considered. The chapter highlights the knowledge required to
plan, teach and assess children in English. It provides guidance to help you review and
develop your subject knowledge prior to beginning or applying for a teacher preparation
programme. Karen and Julia highlight the knowledge that all users of English bring to the
subject and identify ways in which you can build upon and extend this through further
reading, resources and activities.

Adrian Fearn then introduces primary school mathematics and approaches to teaching
and learning this subject in Chapter 6. He highlights how important it is for teachers
to be confident about mathematics and to have a positive attitude to mathematical
learning. The chapter provides you with reflective tasks to clarify your own views on
mathematics and learning. Adrian provides examples to explain the classroom teaching
of mathematics, describes current approaches and illustrates these with examples of
classroom practice and practical mathematical challenges. The final part of the chapter
provides the opportunity for you to begin building subject knowledge related to chil-
dren's misconceptions in mathematical reasoning.

In Chapter 7 Sarah Williams explores how schools develop curricula that are suited to
the needs of their pupils. She examines creativity across the curriculum through explor-
ing approaches to teaching and learning designed to engage and inspire learners. She
focuses on the key concepts behind designing a creative curriculum. Sarah explores how
a creative curriculum is defined, through reviewing practice and theory around engage-
ment, enquiry and experiential learning. She provides case studies of creative teaching,
which show how successful teachers develop and sustain an inspiring learning environ-
ment in their classrooms. Sarah invites you to consider the ownership of knowledge and
the learning process; exploring the social context and the role of classroom talk, and the
significance of motivation and flexibility in learning situations.

Next, in Chapter 8, Jane Bartholomew explores involving children in their development
as learners through ‘learning to learn’. This chapter considers what is understood by
‘learning to learn’ and encourages you to reflect on your own experience of and attitudes
to learning. Drawing on case studies of classroom practice, the chapter explores how
teachers can enable children to become effective learners across the curriculum and
beyond, through: making explicit learning objectives and/or learning outcomes; focus-
ing on skills and attitudes; developing pupil autonomy; and establishing communities
of learning. Jane invites critical appraisal of some widely used initiatives, such as ‘vis-
ual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning (VAK)’ and ‘brain-based learning’. The chapter
explores the role of assessment for learning and behaviour for learning. Throughout the
chapter, Jane considers a range of practical approaches and contexts for learning.

Chapter 9 introduces the concept of inclusion, with several scenarios from practice to
enable you to identify with the theme. Here Janet Goepel and Naomi Cooper introduce
key vocabulary, such as barriers to learning, Special Educational Needs and Disability
(SEND) and English as an Additional Language (EAL). The chapter also explores barriers
to learning which are present in some primary classrooms. Janet and Naomi provide
case studies of inclusive classrooms and inclusive curricula, through which they outline
some of the benefits to all learners of inclusive environments (with a focus on children
with SENs and children with EAL). Quotes and examples from children, parents and
GETTING INTO PRIMARY TEACHING

teachers help you to think about issues from different points of view. Finally, the authors provide questions to frame your thinking when you are visiting schools or engaged in practical experience.

The Conclusion summarises the key themes discussed in the book and outlines how preparing to become a primary teacher may change in the future. David Owen reviews the employment prospects (at the time of writing) for those training to be a teacher. He also considers how, after gaining a place on a teacher preparation programme, successful candidates can subsequently enhance their employment prospects.

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