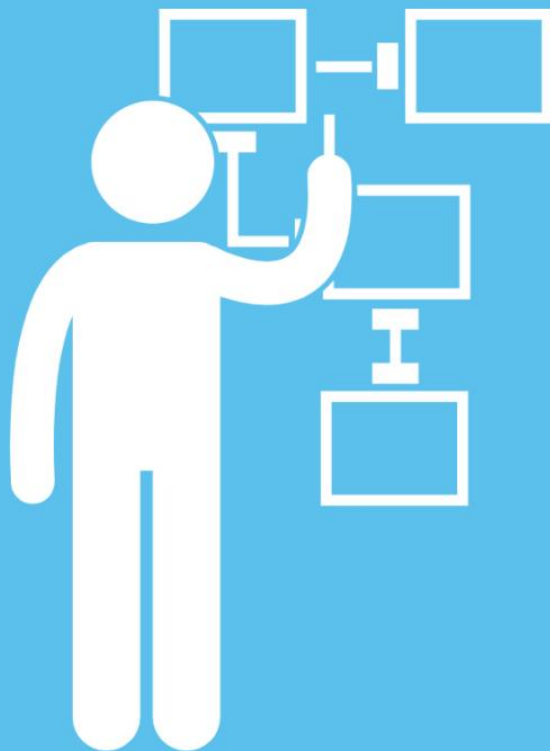


**A ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATION**



# SEPTEMBER

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@EDROUNDTABLES**



## Forward

The following material is a summary of roundtable conversations discussing some of the issues around planning for September. It is not intended to be a final solution but to provide suggestions for possible actions and encourage wider debate.

Huge thanks go to those who participated in the discussion. If you wish to participate in similar conversations then make sure to follow @edroundtables on Twitter.

The conversations took place on 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 with contributions from:

Kate, Lesley, Kyrstie, Ian, Elinor, Ben, Ricky, Nichola, Nicola, Jenny, Fraser, Jonathan & Lee.

## Context

In this case, the focus was on the issues of preparing for September, something heads are usually doing at this time of year.

The discussion was broad and covered a number of areas, most of which are covered in this document.

I have tried to organise the ideas and comments into a more coherent piece than the original transcript and hope that you enjoy reading it.

I apologise to any of those involved if I have misunderstood any of the conversation, these mistakes are mine – don't hesitate to offer clarification.



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## Introduction

Planning for September is the norm for this time of year. Heads reflect on the past year, review their progress against their SIP, look at staffing, training, double-check budgets, tweak the curriculum, a whole host of things.

This year, it isn't so easy. Schools have to prepare for September, but no-one knows what that will look like yet.

With only 3 to 5 weeks left of the school year, there has been limited information from government – which is perhaps, only to be expected, it is hard to plan ahead when you are responding to a pandemic.

However, there are some steps that could be taken in preparation for whatever is thrown at schools and heads.

There were a number of approaches being taken to planning.

- 1) Planning for all children to be back as normal, with an eye on how this could be adapted for 1m social distancing or 2m social distancing.
- 2) Planning for a rotation of all children
- 3) Planning for vulnerable families first

It was widely recognised that planning in too much detail was not possible, but there needed to be something for staff to aim for.

The remainder of the document focuses on some of the common issues that will need to be addressed regardless of the number of children that return.



## The Curriculum

Learning needs to continue, but if partial timetables and reduced numbers of children in school are likely to remain the norm there are lots of challenges with the curriculum. Some of which were highlighted:

Wellbeing and other SEMH topics will need to be covered. The school community will need to be reconnected. Nichola is continuing to work with her school trust to support the development of a recovery curriculum, which is being updated on the Compass Hub website.

Communication between staff about pupils is essential for providing good pastoral support, the deployment of ELSAs and other trained support staff needs to be considered carefully, it mustn't be a barrier to accessing the learning.

There will be gaps in learning, not all pupils will have had access or have chosen to access everything that was available for them to learn during the lockdown.

Home learning and teaching in school will need to be brought into alignment to prevent wider gaps developing. This could be challenging as schools may not have the capacity to support home learners as effectively due to their commitments in school. There is a danger here of disconnecting pupils and their families from the school community.

The use of outside agencies to support the curriculum will need some careful consideration. Which can be employed safely? How do the risk assessments need to be adjusted? Can some, such as peripatetic music teachers, provide remote teaching? How can you support them?

To address issues of gaps and to establish a routine that children need, literacy and numeracy will need to be at the core of the

curriculum. This will also allow the quick identification of gaps, and time for them to be addressed.

There was discussion regarding what could and should be included in the curriculum, this is a difficult balance for school leaders, particularly with the spectre of SATs and other accountability measures hanging over them. If these could be removed, much more progress could be made across ALL areas of the curriculum.

A focus on “sticky” knowledge, reinforcing the key skills in Literacy and Numeracy that will have a positive impact on other areas of the curriculum was suggested as one way to avoid narrowing the curriculum too much, but also supporting any children who are working at home.

Around this other learning opportunities can be developed with a focus on PE, the Arts and a whole school topic with SEMH underpinning this.

Keeping it simple is key to managing the workload for teachers, who will also be doing their best to support children who may still be learning at home.



## **Parents**

There is the potential of a real problem developing in school communities that will need to be addressed, the lack of equity in education for all pupils.

This is NOT the fault of schools, but the result of government guidance and instruction. No Rotas being a large part of this.

Parents of children who are not being taught in school risk becoming disenfranchised by the situation, particularly as levels of support from schools are likely to drop due to demands on teacher time.

Resentment could build up between groups of parents and families and schools should be aware of this. It is a situation that could also be exacerbated by the summer break.

There was also wide discussion in the roundtable around the issue of communication. Many heads are having telephone conversations and emails regarding the wellbeing and education of children, but they were not in regular touch with every parent.

Despite their best efforts, some families are very distrustful of external communications, changing phone numbers regularly, not having an email address or not opening letters.

The wider support networks also don't seem to be as robust as they had been prior to lockdown. Some of this may change as lockdown is eased, but some single parents are reporting that the atmosphere in the home was toxic which is a real concern.

Summer provision has previously supported families through the holidays, without this the picture looked bleaker. Some authorities, Wigan for example, are putting into place a "fit & fed" programme supported by hub schools. This is something that could be explored in other areas too.

Schools are planning to keep lines of communication open via email, twitter feeds, Facebook feeds and blogs. Parent mail and other school apps were also recommended. The only way to avoid or mitigate some of the concerns of parents and the issues that arise is to keep talking.

Sharing of activities that can take place across the summer, films, days out or fun activities that are also educational could all help.



## **NQTs & New Staff**

Being an NQT is often one of the most challenging periods of a teacher's career, it can be "make or break" for many. This September will be even more challenging than normal, many of the NQTs and RQTs will not have had the opportunity to finish placements or establish themselves as "teachers" in their own minds.

For those starting in schools in September it is a time of great excitement but also a time of great trepidation. They have barely experienced "normal" and will be entering the "new normal", which may be an advantage as they will have less adjusting to do from the old normal. It is all new to everyone. They are no further behind other teachers in this respect

The conversation on support was a wide-ranging one with lots of consideration about the various ways that they can be supported. The main challenge is that normal transitions into schools and "the way we do stuff" cannot happen at present.



## **Team Building**

An important part of taking on any new post is becoming part of the team and being made to feel welcome. How do we do this when for many, being in school is not an option.

Communications have to start now, with new staff being included in the weekly staff newsletter, emails about important issues for the new year and even the staff WhatsApp group. Being included in the staff culture and community before you walk through the doors goes a long way to ensuring that new staff get off to a good start.

They will quickly learn who is who and what they do, something that can be a minefield at times and leave people floundering if they don't have that information from the start.

Consider starting contracts early to ensure that they are paid for the summer and can participate in Zoom meetings with their phase and attend socially distanced induction meetings.

There may also be opportunities for them to attend school and observe, from a distance, other teachers to understand the way that the school does things. Although this does depend on risk assessments and guidelines.



## **Mentors**

The biggest thing they need to help them develop is time, if we leave connecting them to the school till later, we rob them of that time.

The right mentor can make a huge difference to the life of an NQT, during the current period choosing someone who has the capacity and strength to be there will be even more essential.

Confidence and trust develop over time, and the right mentor knows how to build up the confidence of the NQT through showing their trust in their abilities. They are there to catch them when they fall, allowing mistakes to be made with a gentle guiding hand to get them back on track.

Plan with them, develop their understanding of quality first teaching, but take on board their ideas, this builds that feeling of inclusivity even further.

Timetabled support sessions each week in addition to PPA for example allow them the time to develop



## **Their Future Plans & Worries**

Getting to know what NQTs want to do with their career is also an excellent opportunity to feed their passions. Over the summer, direct them towards CPD, communities, groups and organisations that can help them develop their learning. This will allow them to flourish when they fully join you in September.

Talk to them honestly about their abilities, what are their challenges? What are their fears? Is it maths understanding, behaviour management or something else entirely? Again, point them towards the places and people that can support them overcoming these.

If bubbles still exist in September, enabling them to observe teaching may not be practical, so other ways of developing teaching practice have to be considered.

1 to 1 coaching sessions, using training days to specifically coach the NQT staff you have



## **Buddies & Other Support**

Support outside of line management is also key, we have all experienced doubts about asking questions that we feel are silly, or that we should already know the answer to, some NQTs may not want to ask their mentor these kinds of questions.

Communication with a buddy or someone else that they feel comfortable asking these questions might make them feel less scared to ask. When starting a new job, there is no such thing as a silly question.

NQTs often benefit from a wider network. If they are the only NQT at the school consider developing a wider network with other

schools in the area, which can be facilitated by someone else. They give the opportunity to work collaboratively, share good practice, good ideas and perhaps develop a shared action research project.

## **CPD**

There are lots of opportunities for NQTs to connect with a range of free CPD resources and support groups on social media. A selection has been included below. Consider directing NQTs towards them, perhaps choosing a few that you think are particularly relevant.

### **YouTube Channels/Playlists**

[EduTeacher Tips](#)

[BrewEd](#)

[ResearchEd](#)

[Bill Rogers - Behaviour](#)

### **A selection of Twitter Accounts to follow**

@youmenqt

@gendercollect

@WomenEd

@BAMEedNetwork

@lgbted

@DisabilityEdUK

@teacher5aday

@HealthyToolkit

@TryThisTeaching

@LessonToolbox

@LitDriveUK

@ECGeogNetwork

@RGS\_IBGschools

@TMHistoryIcons

@histassoc

@1972SHP

@SCHOOLSNE

@Ambition\_Inst

@theASE

@STEMLearningUK

@EAL\_naldic

@refugeecouncil

@RefugeeWeek

@Comm\_ntrust

@ElklanTraining

@NEUnion

@SenecaLearn

There are many more...

@FunkyPedagogy

@Doug\_Lemov

@HuntingEnglish

@MrTs\_NQTs

@nqtcorner

@RoySocChem

### **Free Courses/Websites etc**

[CLTA](#) – Padlet with loads of stuff on – highly recommended

[CCGL with Lyfta](#)

[rsc.org – Chemistry CPD](#)

[SEND Gateway](#)

There are of course many more subject or year group courses and websites that they could visit, suggest a few that you or your staff recommend.



## Summary

Although September is months away, normal is unlikely to be re-established by then. There is likely to be lots of adapting and catching up to do, particularly responding to government guidance. The key will be to focus on the things you can do, the things that can take place without too much change.

Plan for the whole school being back, support your teaching staff and support your community where you can.

However, the biggest thing that leaders can do, that they are in control of, is to take a step back and timetable some time and space for yourselves. You deserve it.

If you have had experiences of the issues discussed and have found potential solutions, then get in touch @edroundtables on Twitter.

If you have an educational topic you would like to discuss with your peers in a confidential space. Then contact @edroundtables or visit [www.edrt.co.uk](http://www.edrt.co.uk)

*Ben Brown*

