



Case study

Support and retain ECTs with team teaching: case study

Boost ECT confidence and retention with Grove School's targeted team teaching approach. Discover how prioritising practical in-classroom support can lead to glowing ECT feedback and staff stability.

What's the approach?

Increase support for early career teachers (ECTs) well beyond the minimum expectations, with weekly team teaching with experienced teachers in a variety of subjects.

About the school

- [Grove School](#) is a 3-form entry primary school in Handsworth, Birmingham, an area of high deprivation
- 46% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (higher than the national average)
- 25% of pupils have special educational needs (SEN)
- The school is rated 'good' by Ofsted
- It currently employs 9 ECTs

This could work for you if ...

- **You have experienced teachers (preferably with 5 or more years of experience) who are available to work with ECTs.** This should ideally include



maths and English specialists and teachers who are strong in subjects like computing, PE and modern foreign languages (MFL)

- **You're willing and able to give your ECTs and their mentors extra non-contact time.** You'll need to provide cover to allow ECTs to be out of class for more than the standard 5-10% of their timetable, and mentors to be out of class for a few hours each week

This model can work with any number of ECTs. "Even if we only had 1 ECT, we'd still do this," says Catherine Dowell, deputy headteacher and ECT induction tutor.

Why try this?

Team teaching has helped Grove School:

- **Improve staff retention and stability.** The school has a relatively stable staff and ECTs often progress to middle leadership roles
- **Become more attractive to prospective ECTs.** Visiting candidates comment on the "overwhelmingly positive" and supportive environment for ECTs, which helps with recruitment
- **Increase ECTs' confidence and knowledge,** particularly in subjects they initially felt less secure in
- **Improve quality of teaching.** Team teaching with experienced teachers and leaders has a direct impact on the quality of teaching, improving pupil outcomes
- **Reduce its need for individual support plans,** and those ECTs who do receive them typically progress quickly and successfully complete their ECT years

"Team teaching weekly with my mentor helped to boost my confidence and knowledge" – ECT, Grove School

Consider giving this a go if:

- You're struggling with teacher recruitment and ECT retention
- You're looking to increase your ECTs' confidence, knowledge and teaching quality
- The support you're providing ECTs isn't having the impact you'd like. As an ECT at Grove School says, "the amount of support you receive as an ECT is a lottery based on the school you start your career in"

"Team teaching weekly with my mentor helped to boost my confidence and knowledge" – ECT, Grove School

How to make team teaching effective

Understand what it is

In practice, team teaching means that ECTs:

- Deliver lessons **jointly** with their mentor or a subject specialist. It's **not** a lesson observation – ECTs see high-quality teaching in action, with their own pupils, and get in-the-moment feedback, modelled for them
- Have dedicated time, with their mentor or subject specialist, to:
 - Plan the lesson together beforehand
 - Discuss and reflect on the lesson afterwards

"Working alongside experienced colleagues allowed me to ... refine my teaching strategies and learn effective behaviour management techniques in a real-time, collaborative environment" – ECT, Grove School

Run training for experienced teachers so they get the essentials down

At Grove School, training is run in-house by senior leaders, and takes a few hours at the start of the school year.

For team teaching to be effective, it's essential that:

- Both teachers are equally involved in delivering the lesson. Avoid 1 person teaching and the other watching
- The focus is on problem-solving and guiding the ECT to get better. This isn't about judgement or grading the ECT. There's no expectation to write anything down



- The experienced teacher creates a supportive, low-stakes environment during the lesson, where ECTs feel comfortable to take risks and know you've 'got their back'

This is what team teaching at Grove School looks like

1. Before the lesson, have a brief meeting (15-20 minutes) to plan the lesson together

- Discuss learning objectives, teaching strategies, roles during the lesson (who will lead which part, who will observe), and any challenges you anticipate, e.g. a concept pupils might find hard to grasp
- Come up with a focus for the team teaching lesson – something the ECT is working on or wants to improve, e.g. differentiation or subject knowledge

2. During the lesson, the experienced teacher should:

- Narrate what they're doing and why they're doing it, e.g. "I can see this group have completed this activity, so let's move them on to the extension activity so they can deepen their knowledge"
- Give the ECT on-the-spot feedback, in a way that doesn't undermine them in front of pupils, e.g. "Did you notice some pupils lost focus after your third instruction? Next time, try shorter instructions and ask specific pupils to repeat them to check understanding"
- Model anything the ECT isn't getting quite right or could be doing better, e.g. addressing low-level behaviour disruption. If possible, give the ECT opportunities to practise what's been modelled, later in the lesson, e.g. "I talked to Ava earlier about using her indoor voice, why don't you go and talk to Omar about it this time?"

3. After the lesson, have another meeting (20-30 minutes) to debrief and reflect

- Discuss what went well, what could be improved, and anything the ECT found particularly challenging
- The ECT should lead this reflection with the experienced teacher providing guidance and advice
- Keep the tone of this meeting positive and supportive. Focus on problem-solving and helping the ECT get better
- Reflect on the pre-agreed focus of the lesson: how did the ECT think this aspect went? What did they learn about this? What are their next steps?



Put in place weekly, termly and one-off support for ECTs and mentors

Given the steep learning curve ECTs face in their first year, Grove School decided to go well above the required 5-10% weekly non-contact time, to give their ECTs the best chance of success. Mentors also get additional support. “We’ve really invested in our ECT mentors and our ECTs: in time and financially,” says Catherine.

Like Grove School, you’ll need to make sure your approach meets the ECT induction requirements – use our [ECT induction checklist](#) to be sure.

Note: it might not be possible for you to set up a full-fledged ECT team teaching programme straight away. Catherine suggests starting with weekly team teaching for 1st-year ECTs with their mentor, then gradually adding more components if you can.

Arrange cover so support can all happen within the school day

This includes planning and reflection time for team teaching lessons. You want this to feel like quality, focused time.

Grove School uses planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) cover teachers and supply cover to release ECTs and mentors. You could also use senior leaders, or in some cases experienced TAs, to cover classes.

If, like Grove School, you’re doing this for a large number of ECTs, make sure to give yourself time to organise the cover timetable. You could use a tool like [TimeTabler](#), which is part of [The Key Group](#).

Provide weekly support for 1st-year ECTs and switch to fortnightly for 2nd-year ECTs

You might want to provide additional specific support for:

- Core subjects you’re focusing on as a school, e.g. Grove School does this for maths, a priority subject for the school this year
- Year groups you’ve identified as more challenging for ECTs (e.g. extra team teaching for ECTs in years 5 and 6 due to a more challenging curriculum)

Here’s what Grove School provides on a weekly and fortnightly basis:



Support	1st-year ECTs	2nd-year ECTs
1 hour team teaching with mentor in an agreed subject (whichever the ECT most needs support in)	Weekly	
Dedicated time for mentor meetings	Weekly	Fortnightly
1 hour team teaching maths with a maths specialist (or whatever core subject you focus on as a school)	Weekly	Fortnightly, weekly for ECTs in year 6
1 hour team teaching with a computing specialist	Weekly, for 1 half term	
1 hour 45 minutes with a drama specialist	Weekly, for 1 half term	Weekly, for 1 half term
1 hour team teaching English with an English specialist	Weekly for ECTs in years 5 and 6	Weekly for ECTs in years 5 and 6
Joint planning time with mentor	Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) ECTs	
1 hour to complete online modules during the school day	Weekly	Weekly

Plus, for **ECT mentors**: weekly time to complete their online modules during the school day.



Add in half-termly and termly support

This includes 'open classrooms': a small group of staff observe an experienced teacher teach a lesson, followed by a 45-minute feedback session. Rotate a different subject and teacher each half-term. This isn't just open to ECTS – provide cover so other teachers can learn from this too.

How this looks at Grove School:

Support	1st year ECTs	2nd year ECTs
'Open classrooms' (see above)	Once a half term	Once a half term
Attend external ECT events (put on by Arthur Terry , the designated body for the ECT programme)	Once a half term	Once a half term
1-to-1 meeting with the ECT induction tutor to review progress and share ECT reports	Towards the end of each term	Towards the end of each term
Dedicated time to meet with the ECT induction tutor		


Plus, for **ECT mentors**: termly time to meet with the ECT induction tutor.

Include one-off support

Add in any additional one-off support you think your ECTs would benefit from, e.g. 1-to-1 sessions with external consultants and team teaching in subjects ECTs often find tricky, such as music, PE and MFL.

Have development days at the start of the year, like a whole day on reading and phonics. You can space out other sessions throughout the year, to see progress, e.g. multiple sessions of behaviour support or PE team teaching.

Grove School provides:



Support	1st year ECTs	2nd year ECTs
1 day reading and phonics development with the English subject leader	First half-term	
1 day maths development with the maths subject leader	First half-term	
1-to-1 session with an external English consultant (review the writing in the ECT's class and identify next steps for individual pupils and the class as a whole)	Once a year	Once a year
1-to-1 session with an external behaviour consultant and the school's SENCO (a 20-minute observation and 20-minute feedback session focusing on problem-solving and next steps)	Autumn term	Spring term
Team teaching a music lesson with the music subject leader	Once a year	Once a year
Team teaching 2 PE lessons with the PE subject leader	Once a year	
Team teaching a MFL lesson with the MFL subject leader	Once a year, for ECTs in Key Stage 2	

Structure mentor meetings to make them productive

Make sure ECTs' weekly or fortnightly mentor meetings have a clear structure, to avoid them becoming a 'general chat'. Include time for:

- Reflection on what's gone well that week/fortnight, and any challenges
- Discussion of team teaching lessons and what they've learned, and how they're getting on with their online modules



- Action planning – specific actions for the ECT or mentor to complete, and when by

Don't create extra recording requirements for mentors or ECTs. Grove School has a meeting record template (see below) but mentors fill this in during the meeting, not afterwards, so there's no extra workload.

Image: Weekly ECT mentor meeting record template - Grove School

Weekly ECT Mentor Meeting Record

Date of meeting: 23.01.25 ECT: XXX Mentor: XXX

This document should be completed during the meeting and a copy should be emailed to the ECT at the end of the meeting.

A Brief Summary of Discussions (note form) Block 1 Module 1.2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • XXX has addressed last week's targets, she is using excellent retrieval strategies to recap prior learning in foundation subjects. • AHT team teaching- conclusions are developing, strong focus on using scientific vocabulary and a 'no hands up' approach was used. • Team teaching with DHT- some low level behaviours noted, new strategies shared by DHT. XXX will implement these before Spring 2 (speak with DHT about using the 'Interrupting Chicken') 		
Agreed Actions (no more than 3)		
Points to be Actioned:	By Whom:	Date to be Achieved:
- Take part in shared Big Write marking- improve subject knowledge of age related writing expectations.	XXX	30.1.25
- During science team-teaching, develop a more dynamic, episodic teaching style with co-teacher. Use this to engage and challenge the pupil.	XXX	30.1.25
- Speak with DHT about the use of the 'Interrupting Chicken' and ask to observe this being used in class.	XXX	30.1.25 (implement by 14.2.25)
Additional Comments (if needed):		
- XXX attending ECT event on 27.01.25		

Here are Catherine's top tips for effectively implementing this approach:

- **Prioritise ECT support and non-contact time – make it a non-negotiable.** You might need to make compromises in your budget elsewhere, "but we always find a way to make it work", says Catherine. "This is the one thing we'll never cut"
- **Identify priority subjects for your school.** Focus subject-specific team teaching on areas of school improvement or where ECTs need the most support. If math is a priority for your school, dedicate time with the math lead. If your ECTs seem to struggle with PE or music, make this the focus
- **Train mentors on effective team teaching strategies.** Emphasise collaboration and coaching over observation or judgement
- **Create a supportive culture.** Senior leaders need to champion this approach to ECT development and make sure it's prioritised. "It has to be an integrated in-school professional development culture and that has to come from senior leaders," says Catherine

Sources

Catherine Dowell is the deputy headteacher, SENCO, English leader, and ECT induction tutor at Grove School.

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