

Effective mentoring in Initial Teacher Education: What works and why?

Case studies from The Open University Partnership in Wales PGCE Programme



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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This collection of case studies showcases some of the effective mentoring approaches taking place across The Open University Partnership in Wales PGCE Programme. At the end of the first year of the programme, feedback from school-based staff highlighted the need to co-construct further resources with schools which reflect the current reforms in Initial Teacher Education and specifically the role of the mentor. There was also a desire to see resources which considered the unique contexts of schools within this pan-Wales programme. This project arose from wider work focused on the creation of mentor training materials which seeks to offer both synchronous and asynchronous development opportunities accessible online and throughout the year. These include course overviews and induction, effective mentoring approaches and support in assessing the student teacher's progress.

The case studies form part of a wider research project that investigated effective mentoring approaches in Initial Teacher Education. In early 2022 mentors were interviewed, practice tutors and school co-ordinators submitted written or audio reflections, and student teachers and curriculum tutors participated in separate group discussions to gather views on the qualities reflected in a good mentor, effective mentoring approaches and the successes and challenges experienced during the mentoring process.

One element of the research project requested mentors to use an artefact of their choice to support their reflection of effective mentoring. A sample of some of these artefacts along with the mentors' comments are presented after the case studies.

For more information on this research project and / or the programme's approach to supporting our mentors, please feel free to contact the academic leads for mentoring at the Open University PGCE in Wales.



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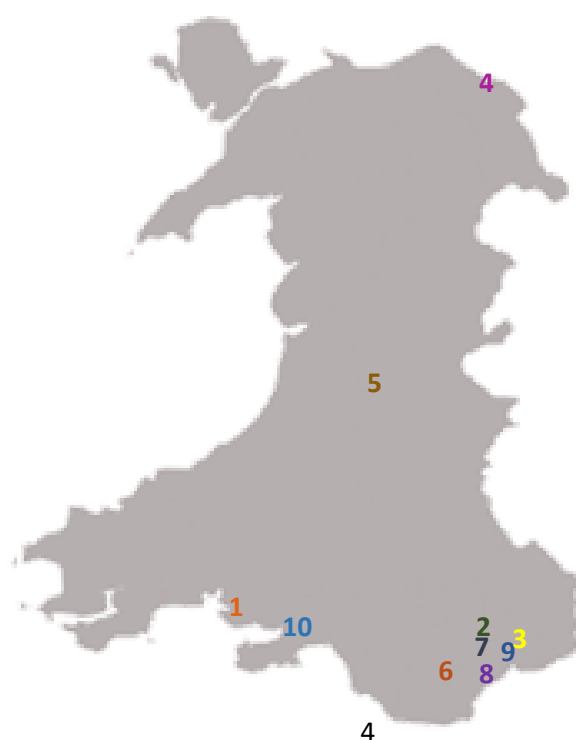
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The case studies

The schools, their location and the theme of each case study.

Case study	School	Case study title
1	Burry Port Community Primary School, Carmarthenshire	'The future's so bright I gotta wear shades'
2	Coedpenmaen County Primary School, Rhondda Cynon Taf	Handing over the reins: a student-centred approach
3	Eveswell Primary School, Newport	With greatness comes responsibility
4	Golftyn Primary School, Flintshire	Reciprocal learning during the mentor-student experience
5	Llanbister Primary School, Powys	Embracing opportunities and challenges
6	Maesteg School, Bridgend	Collaborate, defend and protect
7	Mount Pleasant Primary School, Newport	Finding the joy
8	Severn Primary School, Cardiff	Developing independence and professional identity
9	The John Frost School, Newport	Supporting a range of experiences for student teachers
10	Ysgol Gyfun Bryn Tawe, Swansea	The importance of empathy and building relationships





Case study 1:

‘The future’s so bright I gotta wear shades’

Burry Port Community
Primary School

English-medium primary

216 pupils

The school

Burry Port Community Primary School is in Carmarthenshire, south west Wales.

- Currently 39 per cent of all pupils are eligible for free school meals.
- Nearly all pupils are white British. A few pupils have English as an additional language and very few speak Welsh at home ([Estyn, 2014](#)).

The school has mentored student teachers from different universities across the region for many years. Since September 2021, the school has supported one salaried student teacher’s placements as part of The Open University Partnership.



Mentoring student teachers

The school **sees the potential** in everyone and believes that everyone in the organisation has something to offer. They want to ensure that the potential of developing teachers and leaders is nurtured and is not lost.

Student teachers are supported by **mentoring and coaching methods** that are applied appropriately, depending on the student teacher’s experience, their progress and the context of the discussion.

The importance of **reflection** is reinforced by the school. Student teachers are **given time to reflect** on their practice before discussions where the mentor uses coaching and growth model styles of support i.e. ‘What’s your current issue? Let’s prioritise! How can we break this down? What I hear is that you’re saying.....have you thought about doing more of...?’

Ensuring that student teachers feel safe to **make mistakes and take risks** is of importance to the school’s mentoring approach.

*As a Mentor, you’re going into it because you love seeing the student have that **first light bulb moment**. It’s worth all the effort you put into it, and then you think, right, they’re in this for the **vocation** now, it’s not a job. As long as it’s a **priority for both of you**, then it’s going to be successful no matter what happens in the school day or how busy things are.*

*I came into it [mentoring] seeing the **potential** in everyone that comes into the organisation [...]. They want to make that difference.*

*It’s about identifying the next people to **carry that flame on** and making sure that what you’ve learned can be passed on.*

Student teachers are supported with the balance of **employment, practice learning and module studies**. Expectations are managed in a reassuring and realistic manner whilst maintaining transparency on the profession’s requirements.

The school values the importance of research projects and student teachers are **encouraged to record themselves teaching and watch it back**. Giving student teachers the opportunity to watch themselves and watch the children’s learning is an interesting and effective strategy to gaining more knowledge of practice.

Mentor and student teacher **‘work alongside each other’** during lessons where the mentor works with groups of learners ‘what I’m picking up on about the children is helping me as a teacher to plan their learning as much as watching what [the student] is doing’.

Within the school, **attachment** is an important principle which students are encouraged to develop first before concentrating on their teaching. Understanding how to build those attachments and ensuring children feel safe in their classes is key.



Case study 2:

Handing over the reins: a student-centred approach

Coedpenmaen County Primary
School
English-medium primary
263 pupils

The school

Coedpenmaen County Primary is Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, South Wales.

- The school serves an area that is neither economically advantaged nor disadvantaged. About 16 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and approximately 13 per cent of pupils have additional learning needs ([Estyn, 2012](#)).

The school has mentored student teachers from different universities for many years. Since September 2020, the school has supported salaried and part-time student teachers as part of The Open University Partnership.



Mentoring student teachers

Enjoying being a mentor and passing on knowledge to future teachers is a **privilege** and brings with it personal satisfaction and supports the mentor in their teaching role too.

Even though student teachers draw on the knowledge and skills of their more experienced mentors in the school, it is important that mentors '**let the students have a go**'. Some teachers can find this difficult as they '*like to keep hold of things and keep control*'.

The critical factor for student teachers is the '*self-analysis*' and the **mentor's role** is to help them to identify where they went wrong and what went well.

*I find [being a mentor] **supports me as well**. I feel the students know more about the four core purposes and the new curriculum than I do. I'm hoping the next few years, that depending how well they're taught by the universities, they will be very useful sources of information.*

Student teachers are also supported to develop important '**softer skills**'; such as having healthy relationships with other members of staff – if these exist the job of a teacher is easier. This is achieved by **ensuring student teachers are in the staff rooms**.

Feedback on lessons is immediate as soon as the lesson finishes and the mentor usually begins the conversation with '*How do you think that went?*' and similar to teaching the children other questions include – '*What do you think was a good bit? Is there anything that you think you could do better?*'

*They [student teachers] have introduced new things to me. And I'll think – 'I've never seen that before, or that will work, that's an interesting way of doing it'. But that will only happen if you are **prepared to hand over the reins** to them.*

The mentor meetings are very '**mentee-lead**', with the student teacher bringing tasks they need to complete to the sessions – such as areas that they require more evidence for and the mentor and student teacher work out what is required together.



Case study 3:

With greatness comes responsibility

Eveswell Primary School

English-medium primary

500 pupils

The school

Eveswell Primary School is in Newport, South Wales.

- Most pupils live close to the school. Around 12 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. English is the main home language for the majority of pupils ([Estyn, 2014](#)).
- Around 30 per cent of pupils come from an ethnic minority background. The school has identified nearly 14 per cent of pupils as having additional learning needs. Around 25 per cent of pupils receive support for English as an additional language ([Estyn, 2014](#)).



The school has mentored student teachers from different universities across the region for many years. Since September 2020, the school has supported two part-time student teachers' placements as part of The Open University Partnership.

Mentoring student teachers

Mentoring is seen as an honour, something to be proud of and celebrate when the opportunity arises as it is an opportunity to **share expertise** with future teachers. The responsibility and impact mentors have on a student teacher's early experiences is acknowledged and taken seriously by those who mentor student teachers in the school.

Building a relationship based on **mutual trust and respect** early on is seen as essential so that students know who they can turn to.

*I think it's important to be approachable, always on hand to offer **advice and support** when needed.*

*It's important to get them [student teachers] out of their comfort zone, so that they **embrace opportunities** to develop their own growth mindset.*

Good mentors are identified as having a **range of personal qualities**:

- A sense of **empathy** – all teachers have been there!
- An ability to **model**; both in terms of teaching but also in how you behave and act and approach the role
- An **approachable** manner
- A good **sense of humour**
- **Good listening skills**
- An ability to put someone at ease

While mentors should give clear structure, guidance and support early on, there is a clear sense that student teachers should also be given **space and time to make mistakes** so that they might be used as learning opportunities and reflection points.

Mentors should **encourage and challenge** student teacher to step out of their comfort zone.

Feedback is identified as critical in the process in that it enables both short-term and long-term targets to be set. There is a focus on evaluating what went well, what did not, and what has been learnt from previous lessons to set focused and realistic targets. **Honesty** is seen as crucial to having real impact.

Mentor sessions are **planned a week ahead** so that student teachers can come prepared with what they need support on, ensuring this time is productive and meaningful.

The mentor – mentee relationship is seen as **mutually beneficial** in that the mentor can learn as much from observing the student teacher and their work in the class as the student teacher can learn from taking over.



Case study 4:

Reciprocal learning during the mentor-student experience

Golftyn Primary School

English-medium primary

423 pupils

The school

Golftyn Primary School is in Connah's Quay, Flintshire, north east Wales.

- Around 17 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has very few pupils who are looked after by the local authority ([Estyn, 2016](#)).
- About 13 per cent of pupils have additional learning needs. English is the main home language of most pupils. Very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. No pupils use Welsh as their first language ([Estyn, 2016](#)).



The school has mentored student teachers for many years, and supported a part-time student teacher as part of The Open University Partnership since September 2021.

Mentoring student teachers

*It's a **two-way process** and I feel that when you listen to them [student teachers], you're helping them to reflect on their own teaching, and helping them **learn from their mistakes**.*

*It's important to share those experiences with whoever you're mentoring, because then they know how you've **overcome those failures** and how it hasn't stopped you because we've all had those lessons.*

Mentoring is an opportunity to share experiences and learning. There is a need to create a **comfortable and supportive environment** and establish a **trusting relationship**. Talking about what went well is the easy part but having the relationship to discuss key areas for development and targets can be a challenge for all mentors. There is very much a sense of **mutual learning**. Staff acknowledge that despite many years in teaching that they are still learning and want student teachers to know that. There is a desire to **share past experiences** (both success and failure) and emphasise the learning opportunities from these. It is important to offer student teachers the strategies to overcome perceived failures for example: being able to adapt your lesson plan mid lesson should things not be going to plan.

Constructive feedback is necessary to support student teachers to move forward in their practice. But allowing them to **reflect** on their experience first is important before being critical or unpicking areas for development. Setting SMART targets is crucial in making small steps to success manageable.

There is a clear sense that mentoring skills, just like teaching and learning, need to be honed and developed over time but also revisited periodically by **accessing training**. There is an acknowledgement that there can be a reluctance by some experienced mentors to revisit and engage in training materials. However, this can be dangerous in that it can lead to stagnation and apathy and a lack of forward thinking and approach in terms of supporting the teachers (and thereby the pupils) of tomorrow.

*I do feel that sometimes mentors, if they have been doing it for a long time, don't feel the need to engage in material. I think that's the danger because things are moving and **changing with the times**. We're teaching the **children of today for tomorrow's jobs** and I feel everything's evolving. So if we do things the same way we've always done them, there's a danger of being a little bit stagnant and not moving with the times.*

*'You've got to immerse yourself in all of the **training materials** available.... I never feel that I've got to that point where I don't need to develop.'*



Case study 5: Embracing opportunities and challenges

Llanbister Primary School

English-medium primary

61 pupils

The school

Llanbister Primary School is in Powys.

- The three-year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around two per cent ([Estyn, 2019](#)).
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language or come from an ethnic minority background. No pupils speak Welsh at home. Around seven per cent of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs ([Estyn 2019](#)).

The school has supported a salaried student teacher as part of The Open University Partnership since September 2021.



Mentoring student teachers

Approaches to mentoring **mirror approaches used in the classroom** where student teachers are encouraged to ...

*'go out explore, investigate and come to **their own pedagogical conclusions**'.*

These are then explored in a **collaborative and safe environment** where the student teacher is able to unpick their findings in supportive mentoring sessions.

Embracing opportunities

As a **small rural school**, the opportunity to mentor is not one that comes a long very often and is seen as a chance to learn as well as to support the development of future teachers.

The mentor is seen as a guide who **steers the student teacher** in the right direction but also allows them space to develop by providing opportunity as well as challenge highlighting that mentors should also not be afraid to put students out of their comfort zone.

There is very much a **growth mindset** informed ethos which allows students to make their own mistakes and learn from them.

Embracing challenges

The challenge of **timetabling** is overcome for this small rural school with meticulous planning and clear communication with all. Honouring the hour for a mentor session is deemed crucial otherwise it would not happen. There is a clear positive attitude to **immersing** the student teacher development into the school.

Undertaking many roles within the school, the mentor is enabled to talk and support the student teacher on a range of issues and concepts with authority and experience. In a smaller environment there are less staff, but this can work as an advantage rather than a hindrance as all staff know all pupils and policy well and are able to offer support easily.

Responsibility for the student teacher is then **shared** and thus so is the workload. Mentors support class teachers and vice versa in observing and mentor sessions.

*It's the same with children isn't it? They **don't always learn in the same way** and that's the same for adults as well. But it's good to have an arsenal, armoury or something like that. It's good to have these pieces of equipment in **your toolbox**.*

There is a clear feeling that staff can dedicate a lot of attention to supporting the student teacher despite perceptions that this would be a greater challenge in a school of this size *'it's not just my ideas as well, it's that **whole wider school support and sharing of ideas**'.*



Case study 6:

Collaborate, defend and protect

Maesteg School

11-18 English-medium
mixed comprehensive

1075 pupils

The school

Maesteg School is located to the north of Bridgend, South Wales.

- About a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, with just over half of pupils living in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Wales ([Estyn, 2019](#)).
- Just under a third of the pupils have a special educational need. A very small number have English as an Additional Language. There are very few pupils who speak Welsh at home ([Estyn, 2019](#)).



The school has mentored student teachers from different universities across the region for many years. Since September 2021, the school has supported four salaried student teachers' placements as part of The Open University Partnership.

Mentoring student teachers

The school-based mentors operate a '*my door is always open*' policy supported by a comforting hot beverage and a listening ear to help develop a **mutual and respectful relationship**.

There are varying aspects to the mentoring role, that require different approaches and sometimes different personas – '*my observer and feedback persona is very different to my questioning persona and knowing when to apply them needs skill and tact*'.

There is a responsibility to '*care for*' and '*do the best by*' the student teachers. The school has a culture of creating independent, self-reflective teachers who are '*empowered individuals, confident enough to progress when they are established*'. The mentors have a **sense of responsibility** toward the student teachers and to defend their best interests.

*I thought at the beginning that direct feedback was what I should be doing and I realised what I needed to be doing was **encouraging the students to be reflective practitioners** and to use everything that they're seeing and doing with the Open University and the experience in the classroom to promote self-progress.*

*There's an element of **protection** in mentoring and it's important to **safeguard** them [the student teacher] from doing more than is required of them too soon. It is important that everyone is looking after them, until they find their feet.*

Having a student teacher encourages mentors to self-reflect on their own practice. Mentors use questions to **facilitate thinking** and **promote self-reflection** as opposed to giving direct instructions.

Collaboration involves supporting student teachers with the teaching they receive from the university to modelling the skills needed to deliver the GCSE curriculum. **Team teaching and live coaching** also improves practice and strengthens relationships.

There is collaboration between the mentor and school-co-ordinator, and **working jointly** with others towards shared goals can be very satisfying.

*'**Team teaching** can include jumping in and supporting when I think something needs to be built on, but not in a patronising way, just in a 'I'm-in-the-room-and-can-help-you' way.'*



Case study 7: Finding the joy

Mount Pleasant Primary School

English-medium primary

272 pupils

The school

Mount Pleasant Primary School is in Rogerstone, near Newport, South Wales.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is two per cent ([Estyn 2018](#)).
- Ten per cent of pupils have additional learning needs. Very few pupils have statements of special educational need. Most pupils are of white British ethnicity. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home ([Estyn 2018](#)).

The school has mentored student teachers for many years, and supported a salaried and a part-time student teacher as part of The Open University Partnership since September 2020.



Mentoring student teachers

*It doesn't matter how old you are or what situation you are in at the time, always make sure that you're having **fun** and maintaining a **sense of humour**; focus on the fun while you are doing things.*

*It's definitely developed my mentoring style [...] we're **working together** and it's not just me telling them [the student teacher] what to do.*

Walt Disney's '*laughter is timeless*' reminds mentors, student teachers and pupils that laughter, **having fun** and a sense of humour is important for everyone. This mindset is also relevant in times of adversity, '*even if things aren't great, remember that it's not the end of the world, and think 'come on we can do this''*.

There is pride in student teachers feeling happy and connected as this can result in successful practice. Investing in the student teacher so that they feel valued and part of the school's teaching team is important. **Lines of communication** are always open via, '*open door policy*' and '*just ask – that's what we're here for*', along with flexible drop ins and online meetings during Covid isolation times.

Positive relationships lead to effective collaboration and this encourages mentors to reflect on their own pedagogy. Student teachers are part of the school staff and this is supported by working with leadership groups across the school and student teachers being included in whole school INSET and training.

In addition to the daily learning conversations, formal mentoring sessions take place weekly to evaluate the student teacher's progress against targets. It is an opportunity to engage with the **Professional Standards and self-reflections** from that week's lessons. The mentor has checklists of 'jobs' to do, ensures all school resources are available, discusses research projects and looks for opportunities to build themes into lesson planning.

*The student teacher is part of our school staff, so we make sure that we're using the whole school and **collaborating with a range of teachers**, so they get the best from everyone.*

When writing Practice Learning Reports, the mentor finds **collaborating with other colleagues** such as the school co-ordinator, practice tutor and colleagues across the school helpful.



Case study 8:

Developing independence and professional identity

Severn Primary School
English-medium primary
490 pupils

The school

Severn Primary is located close to the centre of Cardiff, South Wales.

- The school serves a multicultural community, approximately 23 per cent of pupils are White British ([Estyn, 2016](#)). There are 55 different languages and dialects spoken by pupils.
- About 24 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals ([Estyn, 2016](#)). Approximately 18 per cent of pupils have additional learning needs.



The school has mentored student teachers for many years, and supported a part-time student teacher as part of The Open University Partnership since September 2021.

Mentoring student teachers

I've tried to give [the student teacher] a lot of space when they're exploring ideas and teaching so that they find their own way and they are not trying to be a sort of carbon copy of me.

You are continually working with them, as you try to make sure they take some ownership and use their own strategies and ideas.

Motivated by previous support received from others to develop professionally, the mentor welcomed the opportunity to help someone else with their career development. They draw on a **range of mentoring approaches** to provide support, but key to the whole process is not to be 'over bearing'.

Some of the most important aspects of mentoring are for a mentor to:

- show good practice yourself
- make links with other teachers' practice
- discuss possible approaches prior to a lesson
- evaluate the lesson afterwards

During the early stages of the placement, the mentor would **offer suggestions** as to how they would deliver an activity – as this is the **familiarisation stage**. So there would be examples and demonstrations. But then the mentor '**steps back**' and encourages more '**ownership of the lesson**' and also for the student teacher to take on the responsibility for organising resources.

Joint observations with the school co-ordinator are useful in supporting the mentoring process in the school. Along with receiving feedback from the Curriculum Tutor regarding the lesson observations completed.

The school invested in us, by giving us time in the school day. So we could approach it [mentoring] in a calm, non-hurried way without people interrupting us. This is very, very useful.

The school is very supportive of the mentoring role and allocated **additional non-contact time** once a fortnight for both the mentor and student teacher, providing a protected hour for focused mentoring activity.



Case study 9:

Supporting a range of experiences for student teachers

The John Frost School

11-18 English-medium
mixed comprehensive

1307 pupils

The school

The John Frost School is located in the south-western part of Newport, South Wales.

- About a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, with just over half of pupils living in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Wales ([Estyn, 2020](#)).
- A third of pupils come from homes where English is not the main language and 40 per cent are from a minority-ethnic or mixed-race background ([Estyn, 2020](#)).

The school has mentored student teachers from different universities across the region for many years. Since September 2021, the school has supported two part-time student teachers as part of The Open University Partnership.



Mentoring student teachers

School-based mentors provide the *'first port of call'* for student teachers when they have any queries or worries. **Support with lesson planning** can be particularly dominant for new student teachers.

It is equally as important to provide **feedback** on the proposed lesson plan and the delivery of the lesson. To deliver feedback effectively there are **regular meetings** between the student teacher and the mentor.

This **regular contact** includes a longer meeting at least once a week and incidental catch ups during the week too, as student teachers *'really value a regular quick catching up or checking in'*.

Student teachers also have **opportunities to see other teachers** in the department with a range of teaching styles teach, because it's easy to just allow a student to see their mentor or see teachers that are a bit like their mentor.

It's necessary for a student to see how lots of different teachers teach and how they approach the subject in their own way. Whether someone's particularly innovative and creative or somebody is a little bit more serious [...] I always ensure that they've got a really broad and balanced timetable of observations.

My mentor is really good at homing in on areas where I lack expertise and giving practical ways to improve.

Student teachers are also supported by mentors with **suggested reading** and by taking part in **whole school training activities**.

Sometimes, during observations, **mentors take part in the lesson** as if they are one of the pupils. This is to see that they understand the instructions and what sort of discussion could take place on the lesson content, or to help identify any barriers to success. This can also help to provide the student teacher with *'more authentic feedback'*.

'Acting out' what happened during a lesson is also an approach used – particularly if something did not go to plan during a student teacher's lesson. The mentor and the student teacher try different approaches to what could have been said or done in the lesson. The student draws on that experience the next time a similar instance arises.



Case study 10:

The importance of empathy and building relationships

Ysgol Gyfun Bryn Tawe

Welsh-medium 11-18 school

903 pupils

The school

Ysgol Gyfun Bryn Tawe is located in the north of Swansea.

- Just over 10 per cent of pupils are eligible for free schools meals ([Estyn, 2019](#)).
- Around 10 per cent of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes and nearly all pupils speak Welsh fluently. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language ([Estyn, 2019](#)).

The school has mentored student teachers for many years. Since September 2021, the school has supported one part-time student teacher as part of The Open University Partnership.



Mentoring student teachers

Professional development and the **teacher growth process** are important factors of effective mentoring within the school. The school is keen to gain a broader understanding of the training provided for student teachers through their university studies to gain a more holistic view of the provision needed. In order to reinforce effective mentoring approaches, mentors engage thoroughly with the training materials. The mentor is considered a facilitator; they are **bridging the gap** between the student teacher and the classroom. Mentors **share knowledge and experience** with their student teachers and they also facilitate in helping the student teachers to **build relationships**.

Empathy: The school values giving early career teachers experience as mentors. Student teachers are given an experience where **mentors demonstrate empathy** towards their progress, rather than concentrating on sharing negative aspects of their practice.

With their own experiences as student teachers in mind, mentors demonstrate an '*understanding of what students are going through*'. Students are encouraged to develop their own teaching style and put their own '*spin*' on practice. A mentor session is a dialogue between the mentor and the mentee. Student teachers are encouraged to use two coloured highlighter pens on their **written feedback** which represent '*what went well*' and '*improvements needed*'. These form the focus for the development **targets** and emphasise **strengths**.

*It's never anything like you expect it to be when you come in as a trainee teacher. I found massive comfort in that **relationship** that I had with my mentor.*

*I feel that a lot of the time the mentor needs to be **a sounding board**, needs to be someone who is prepared to sit and converse and **spend time** with the student and work on teaching them what it is to teach.*

Relationships: Developing a strong mentor and student relationship is important for the school's mentoring approach. Ensuring that student teachers feel comfortable enough to '*open up*' during difficult times, and that they understand that the mentor is coming from a **caring perspective** is key to productive conversations. If a student was experiencing difficulties with their workload, empathy would be shown with an understanding of course commitments and teacher pressures. Students would be **encouraged to reach out, be honest and ask for help** as this is considered as a true reflection of what teaching can be like at times.

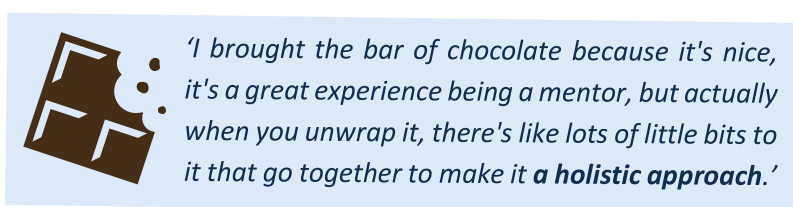
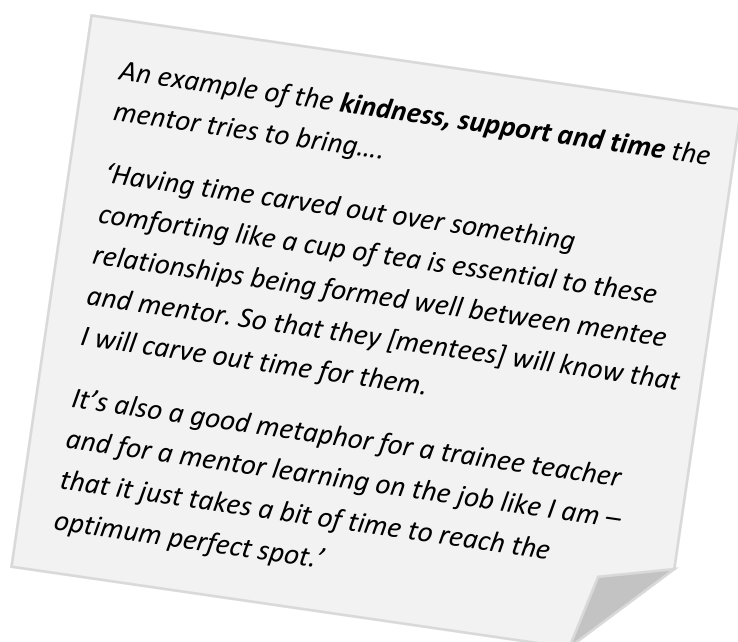
Early in their practice learning time, student teachers are encouraged to spend time **developing relationships** with their pupils because '*half of teaching is that relationship*'. Emphasis is placed on speaking appropriately to learners and ensuring they are comfortable with the student teacher, in order to potentially achieve the best response in their learning.

Mentors' reflections and artefacts

The research study that informed the case studies collected data via interviews with mentors, discussion groups with student teachers and curriculum tutors, and written or audio recorded reflections submitted by practice tutors and school co-ordinators.

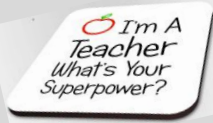
To support the discussion, mentors were requested to bring an artefact to the discussion; an object, photo, or a song title that they felt summed up their experience of effective mentoring.

The following presents the artefacts mentors brought and includes their commentary about their choice of artefact representing effective mentoring.





'There are lots of different aspects to the bicycle-tool.'
Mentoring is like this – there are different ways of doing things/
different approaches that can be used to support a mentor
session or the discussion following a lesson.'

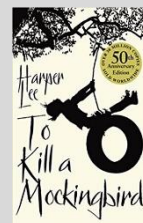


'It's a coaster [...] it was a gift from my very first student teacher. At the
time [there was] an inside joke about teachers having to sort of be
superheroes. It's one of those things you can never be **truly prepared** for
and how what we do on a day to day basis is sometimes indescribable [...] I
can be reminded that **what we do is really clever.**'



'I just feel that this symbolises when you're mentoring somebody the
starting point really of where they are. Each little bubble is part of their
potential and **your job as a mentor is to unlock their full potential** so
that you can pop up as many of the little domes as you possibly can. I feel
that is one of the main roles unlocking their full potential.'

'If I have to choose someone that represents it [mentoring], it would be
Atticus Finch. He's **patient**, he **educates**, he's **kind**, he doesn't discriminate,
he's **got time for everyone** no matter who or what they are. I feel like the
characteristics of that character really embody what it is to be a good, solid
mentor for someone.'



“Laughter is timeless”

*I always say this – not only to the students that are coming to school, but to the children as well; that it doesn't matter how old you are or what situation you're in – to always keep making sure that you're **having fun** [..]. Focusing on the positives and just having fun while you're doing things I think is really important.*

Songs suggested by mentors that reflect effective mentoring

Let it be ... ‘asking for advice in the lyrics ... when I find myself in times of trouble. Being a student – you know what – **it doesn't matter if you make mistakes.**’



A little help from my friends ... ‘you're not in this alone, that **support network** is there for you. Don't be afraid to reach out, reaching out is not a sign of weakness. If anything it is a strength because you can tap into **other people's expertise**. There are so many people within the school willing to help.’

The climb ... ‘overcoming these struggles and adversities, talk about the importance of not giving up, continuing to **try your best** for yourself and the pupils.’

The future's so bright I gotta wear shades ... ‘it's about identifying the next people to carry that flame on and making sure what you've learnt can be passed on. You also **nurture their own spark** because everyone brings something else.’

Don't stop believing ... ‘a journey song, life experiences and that **belief in yourself.**’

Further information

A free course – [A mentoring mindset](#) – is available to support anyone based in an education setting to develop understanding of effective mentoring of beginner teachers.



For more information about The Open University Partnership in Wales PGCE Programme please visit [Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Wales | Open University](#)

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