



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Two sustaining factors for new teachers

Dr Kathryn Spicksley (University of Birmingham) &  
Professor Alison Kington (University of Worcester)



# Teacher retention: a policy problem

- Five year out-of-service rate for 2016 entrants: **31.2%** (Long & Danechi, 2022)
- Policy responses include:
  - Reducing workload (*2014 Workload Challenge*)
  - Increasing pay (*Increase in starting salaries to £30,000 by 2024*)
  - Support for ECTs to increase their skills and knowledge (*ECF*)
- However, support for teachers to develop a robust and positive sense of professional identity/self less evident in policy responses
- Our research has identified two ‘**sustaining factors**’ which help teachers to develop and maintain commitment and motivation in the profession, particularly during difficult times



# Sustaining factor 1: positive professional relationships with peers



[I have] never worked so hard trying to balance everything out [...] the only thing keeping me going is my colleagues.

**Julia, NQT**



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Sustaining factor 2: development of a positive professional identity

[teaching is about] working in this city,  
because I was raised here so I feel  
quite passionate about that [...] I'

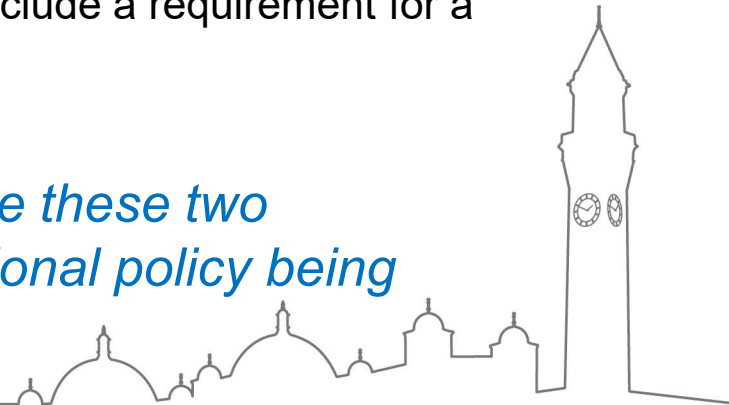
**Isabella, NQT**



# Recommendations to policymakers

- Revise Standard 8 of the Teachers' Standards to foreground the importance of professional identity and collegial peer relationships in schools;
- Embed knowledge of these two 'sustaining factors' throughout the 'golden thread' of teacher development – CCF, ECF, relevant NPQs;
- Change the School Premises Regulations (2012) to include a requirement for a communal space for school staff.

*Can you make some small changes to promote these two sustaining factors in your settings, without national policy being changed?*



# Current project: Playing Teacher – designing a mentoring intervention to support Early Career Teachers



People who responded to a call about remembering their favourite teachers sometimes spoke about gifted storytellers:

*...she had the ability to read aloud in a way that kept the whole class spellbound...*

*...when she closed the book at the end of the chapter I can still hear the soft communal sigh of the whole class who had been listening enthralled...*

*...her lessons were full of reading aloud to bring texts to life...*

What strategies do you use to engage students and draw them into learning?

What do you remember about your favourite teacher?

The Playing Teacher Project

Dr Kathryn Spicksley • [kspicksley@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:kspicksley@brookes.ac.uk)

Quotes are from the University of Sussex Mass Observation archive (Summer Directive 2012), respondents C3167 (top quote), B1771 (middle quote) and P4813 (bottom quote)

Current project:  
Playing Teacher – designing a mentoring intervention to support Early  
Career Teachers



<https://forms.office.com/e/J4xmWvjDpD>

Email me at:  
[k.a.spicksley@bham.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.spicksley@bham.ac.uk)

