RETAIN Teacher Retention Programme: The role of continuing professional development for a resilient and sustainable 21st-century teaching profession.

Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope, Professor Sonia Blandford (Professor Tim Cain) – The Cornwall College Group, Institute of Education UCL and Edge Hill University
RETAIIN Early Career Teachers
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**Partners**
Project Lead: Cornwall College (Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope)
Regional Leads and Programme Developers: Cornwall College – Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope (South West); Institute of Education UCL – Professor Sonia Blandford (South East); Edge Hill University – Professor Tim Cain (North West)
Focus
• Early Career Teachers working in primary schools with the highest level of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (measured by Ever 6) in Cornwall

Aim
To improve:
• Early Career Teacher (Yr 1-3) retention
• Key Stage One literacy

Rationale
• One of the most significant influences on the quality of student learning at school is the class teacher (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, 2014; Chetty et al., 2011; Hanushek, 2011; Sutton Trust, 2011).
• Newly-qualified teachers (NQTs) experience ‘reality shock’ (Veenman, 1984), because of the personal and professional demands on new teachers, and the unpredictability and complexity of their role. In many cases they leave teaching (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Høigaard et al., 2012).
• There is therefore a need for additional support for Early Career Teachers (ECTs). This support is greater in schools with additional challenges, such as those with a high proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (Blandford, 2012; Dunne et al., 2007).
• This intervention will establish a Professional Learning Community for ECTs that will encourage a commitment to school improvement and student attainment (Dufour, 2004) and thereby not only improve student outcomes in KS1 literacy, but RETAIN ECTs.
The Project
RETAIN consists of:
1. A Continuing Professional Development Programme:
   • 3 modules or ‘thinking spaces’ in which ECTs can learn, understand and apply evidence to practice the following areas:
     1. Understanding and mitigating against the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on schools and pupil.
     2. Skills and Practice: Pedagogy
     3. Professional Teaching: processes, structures and career pathways

NB: Each module has a taught component (delivered as two whole day workshops) and a coaching component (coach works with the ECT in school to apply what is being learned to practice).
• 2 workshops for all ECTs, school champions and Head Teachers (one prior to commencement of RETAIN to share information with ECTs and Head Teachers and train School Champions, and the other at the end of the RETAIN programme to share progress and outcomes).

• An online professional learning platform - to support a Professional Learning Community and to provide resources for the ECTs. We have called this ‘The Bubble’ and it has been hosted by Achievement for All and allows the ECTs and School Champions access to all Achievement for All resources [http://afaeducation.org/](http://afaeducation.org/)

2. Pilot in Cornwall and started with 12 primary schools (selected through county held records for Ever 6 and schools with highest level of pupils claiming Ever6 who were eligible for the pilot). 2 schools withdrew from the RETAIN programme the week it was due to commence and one ECT was removed from the programme in November 2016. In January 2017 RETAIN had 9 schools and 10 ECTs.

School champions were identified (and funded) in each school to support the ECTs in undertaking the RETAIN and promoting their involvement to senior leaders. The Lead Coach for RETAIN provides one to one regular coaching in school for the ECTs to link what they have learned on the RETAIN programme to their practice.
Outcomes

RETAIN AIMS:

Support ECTs in wanting to remain in the teaching profession by...

✓ Establishing a Professional Learning Community of ECTs that support each other professionally, which has been achieved through...

- Increasing the confidence, skills, knowledge, understanding, analysis and reflection in the ECTs, which will...

➢ Enhance the ECTs practice (engagement in teaching and investment in self, school and pupils), that will...

❖ Improve the progress of pupils literacy
Findings so far
An independent evaluator was appointed by the EEF to undertake a full evaluation of the RETAIN programme. Their report will be available via the EEF in August 2017.

Findings so far suggest that RETAIN is having a positive impact on the ECTs, schools and pupils:

• There is emerging evidence that the combination of the programme components helped raise the confidence levels of ECTs' in differing but complementary ways.
  – the taught sessions gave ECTs the confidence that their practices were backed up by evidence
  – the in-school coaching helped ECTs to see the wider context and the ideas for change that came from that
  – the school champion helped ECTs to see ideas in their own context
  – working with peers helped them to see that there were others out there in very similar situations (that they weren't alone, that others were having a tough time too).
Coaching and peer collaboration were viewed by ECTs and school champions as very important components which distinguished the course from other training programmes. They perceived that this enabled the theory and taught elements of the sessions to be put into a real life context.

Participation in the programme has had some positive influence on the following intermediate ECT teacher outcome indicators:

- **knowledge and understanding**
  
  'It’s changed the way I think about the children’s 'normal'. So we were talking about how one person’s 'normal' is completely different to someone else’s 'normal',... because I’ve come from a very different background to some of my children it’s made me think about that child and trying to understand that child, a bit more empathy than just teaching them as a child. It’s made me think about the way I speak, like the language and stuff that I use when I’m talking in a classroom.' (ECT)
• research use
'I know they were looking at boys...from disadvantaged backgrounds [in the taught session]. We’ve got in [the ECT's class] a big group of boys who are from that background. I know that that research in particular has been helpful in how [the ECT] structures what they’re trying to do in literacy. They’ve tried to make it a lot more meaningful. ..... So I think that particular piece of research was very powerful for [the ECT] and those taught sessions around that.' (School Champion)

• confidence - including self-efficacy
‘In her role as leading reading in Key Stage 1, she was very, very nervous about taking that on, because she didn’t see herself as having experience in that area. I know that from a few conversations with her, that the research and conversations she’s been having through RETAIN have made her see that she does have that experience. She’s been teaching it for two or three years and now she’s got this extra layer of research that she knows works well or which she knows doesn’t work as well, and she’s been able to make changes to the structure of how she’s leading that area when you look at it compared to what the other person was doing. So yes, I do see her being more confident in that area.' (School Champion)
'The coaching sessions ....have definitely helped. Last year was a tough year ....and [the lead coach] has built my confidence back up again and showed me that actually I am doing things well. That’s been really helpful. Then talking to other people who were in the same predicament has helped as well, to actually know that I’m not on my own.' (ECT)

• **practice change**

'Things in our school in particular can become quite overwhelming, and what I’ve noticed is they’ve managed to gain a better perspective on the way things are and the fact that sometimes what they’re being asked to do isn’t unreasonable, is the same that everyone else is being asked to do. That has helped them and me actually a lot. So that’s been useful.' (Head Teacher)
• Some early indications of positive impacts on pupils (note - measurement of pupil impact is beyond the scope of this evaluation)

'[The ECT's] our Year 2 teacher and we had our best set of Year 2 SATs results last year for literacy, which was great. ....I would say that there has to be a correlation somewhere between the work that [the ECT's] been doing and the outcomes for those children last year in terms of our results and her understanding of the links between, you know, just the very simple things that [the ECT] can do in [their] practice to make [their] children as ready for learning and as good learners as they can be.’ (Head teacher)
Some early indications of positive impacts on participating schools

'Better understanding of disadvantage and what we can do within the classroom to support this' (ECT)

'Having [the ECT] on this RETAIN programme has just made...the senior leadership team and management more aware of those early career teachers. I think it’s quite easy to just in the day-to-day running of the school just see people as teachers, whereas actually you’ve got teachers who are very experienced of 40 years, and then you’ve got teachers who are...two years into the job and their take on things is very different. (School Champion)
'Broadened my awareness on accessing different professional opinions and studies on particular educational topics' (ECT)

'it’s made her really aware of the context that we work in. I think that has been incredibly powerful. I think our school has been hard to work at and I think you get some people who come to our school and unfortunately it’s not for them. I think for her to meet with other colleagues in other schools. That has been really powerful.' (School Champion)

Next steps for RETAIN...Initial Teacher Education? NQT induction? Continuing Professional Development? All of these?
Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope, 
tanya.ovendenhope@cornwall.ac.uk

Professor Sonia Blandford
Sonia.blandford@afaeducation.org