

NEWS

A message from the Director of East London Teaching School Hub

As we approach the end of the calendar year, it's the perfect time to reflect on what we've achieved across Tower Hamlets and Hackney. Together, we've worked to ensure teachers in our region have access to the highest-quality, evidence-informed professional development — making a real difference to the children in our schools. London Teaching School Hubs and RISE advisors are also collaborating to connect all London schools with comprehensive professional learning opportunities.



In this edition, we showcase the spirit of partnership, transparency, and inclusion that underpins everything we do. You'll hear directly from Teacher Degree Apprentices, Early Career Teachers (ECTs), mentors, induction tutors, and NPQ participants as they share their experiences and insights.

East London is a fantastic place to work, and I feel privileged to be part of a network of dedicated teachers and leaders striving to be the very best — because they want the very best for every child.

Wishing you a joyful festive season and a restful break. I look forward to continuing our work together in the New Year.

Ruth Smith

Director of East London Teaching School Hub

Spotlight on the Secondary Maths Teacher Degree Apprenticeship BSc (QTS)

Ruth Smith, Director of the East London Teaching School Hub, recently visited Mulberry School for Girls, which has partnered with UCL Institute of Education to deliver an exciting new route into teaching: the Maths Teacher Degree Apprenticeship.



This innovative four-year programme combines university study with on-the-job experience, aiming to address the national shortage of specialist maths teachers. During her visit, Ruth spoke with two apprentices, Aneeqa and Sara (both former students), and their mentor, Lynne, to learn more about the programme and how it is progressing.



Aneeqa and Sara with their Mentor Lynne Wooldridge at Mulberry School For Girls

Why did you both choose to teach secondary maths?

Aneeqa: Maths has always been my favourite subject, right from primary school. At secondary level, especially in sixth form, I loved learning the thinking behind the processes. Helping classmates with problems made me realise how much I enjoyed explaining concepts. One day, my teacher said, "You'd make a great teacher," and that was the push I needed.

Sara: I loved maths throughout my school journey. During A-levels, I realised how much I wanted to pursue it. Teaching appealed because it's not just about sharing knowledge — it's about showing students who might not love maths yet why it can be exciting and interesting.

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Why did you choose the apprenticeship route over the traditional degree and postgraduate training?

Sara: It's unique! We learn at university and apply that learning straight away in school. For example, last week we studied behaviour management at university, and this week we applied it during small group work. That immediate connection between theory and practice is invaluable.

Aneeqa: Exactly. Instead of waiting years before stepping into a classroom, we're learning maths and teaching skills side by side. It's hands-on and structured, which makes the experience richer. And it's affordable.

Both apprentices highlighted that this route allows them to earn while they learn, avoiding the financial burden of tuition fees and living costs associated with a traditional degree. "It means we can focus on becoming great teachers without worrying about debt," says Sara.

What does a typical week look like for you?

Sara: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays we are in school. Tuesdays and Fridays are university days – Tuesdays for maths and education modules, Fridays for further study.

Each week, we're set school-based tasks to complete, such as supporting Year 11 lessons or leading small-group tuition for A-level students.

Aneeqa: Recently, we worked with a group of six students and applied behaviour strategies we'd learned. It was challenging but rewarding—seeing students go from struggling to saying, "Oh wow, I get it now!" makes it all worthwhile.

What's been the highlight so far?

Aneeqa: Building relationships with students. At first, they were hesitant to ask for help, but now they call us over confidently. That trust makes a huge difference.

Sara: For me, it's the balance. The tasks build gradually, so it's not overwhelming. And seeing theory come to life in the classroom is amazing.

Mentor's Perspective: Why This Route Works

Why was the school prepared to invest in this route?

Lynne explains: "We saw this as a long-term investment. The programme is structured so apprentices grow gradually into the role, which means less disruption to student learning compared to some other routes. And honestly, the value they add now—supporting lessons, tutoring, creating resources—is huge."

How did you and the school support the transition from being a former student to a member of staff?

Lynne explained that she knew the transition from student to staff could feel daunting, so clear structures were put in place. Initially, the apprentices worked in a separate staff area rather than the maths office to help shift the dynamic. She described how early conversations focused on professionalism to support the transition from student to apprentice and HR protocols. Responsibilities were introduced gradually, beginning with observation and small group work before moving to more active roles. Lynne said this scaffolding helped the apprentices feel confident and respected as colleagues.

What makes this route effective?

Lynne believes the apprenticeship model offers a "slow and gentle approach" that builds confidence and competence over time. Unlike some ITT routes that throw trainees in at the deep end, this structure ensures apprentices are well-prepared before taking full responsibility for classes. Lynne also reflects that the apprenticeship route provides an affordable route into higher education and employment.

What do apprentices do during the week?

They're far from passive observers. Activities include: small group tuition for A-level students; acting as teaching assistants in Year 7 and Year 11 classes; resource creation, including designing Year 11 study plans and recording explainer videos; assisting with marking and data entry. Aneeqa and Sara recently successfully completed A levels in Maths and Further Maths and are well equipped to support current students with their studies. Lynne says, "Honestly, we couldn't cope without them. They've added so much value to our department."

What's professionally rewarding about mentoring?

For Lynne, mentoring is one of the most fulfilling parts of her role: "I really enjoy working with new teachers. Seeing their progress week by week—both mathematically and pedagogically—is exciting. Mentoring gives me a sense of purpose beyond my classroom teaching. It keeps my role fresh and professionally stimulating." This reinforces how vital mentoring can be in helping keep expert teachers in the system and sustaining the passion and expertise of those already in the profession.

How does this route help the profession?

With NFER research showing that 15% of maths lessons in England during 2023-24 were taught by teachers who were not subject specialists, Lynne sees the bigger picture.

“This programme is a way to change that. Even if apprentices move on to another school after four years, we've helped create excellent teachers who will impact thousands of young people.”

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Reflections

The Maths Teacher Degree Apprenticeship is more than an ITT route—it's a strategic response to a national challenge. By blending academic study with real classroom experience, it equips future teachers with the skills and confidence they need while offering schools immediate support.

For apprentices, it's an affordable way to qualify without the burden of student debt. For schools, it's an investment in quality teaching and long-term impact. Ruth reflects: "Interestingly, Aneeqa and Sara are the only 18-year-olds on this course. All their peers are in their mid-twenties and career changers. Although the TDA is in its early stages, it strikes me as an innovative and credible route to support young people in our local community to access the teacher profession and to be the local role models we seek for our schools."



Interested in finding out more?

Schools considering this route can contact Ruth Smith, Director of East London Teaching School Hub, for guidance on how to get involved. More information on the UCL IOE TDA can be found [here](#). Together, we can ensure more great maths teachers enter the profession and transform outcomes for young people.

Get into Teaching | Start your Teaching Journey

Please share and promote the following opportunities with your school networks and anyone considering a career in teaching.

Get Into Teaching

There are fantastic opportunities for prospective teachers to have their questions answered by experienced teachers and local training providers.

Find an event near you or online: [Get Into Teaching | GOV.UK](#)

Get School Experience

School experience gives future teachers the chance to learn more about the profession by visiting schools. It can help them:

- Decide if teaching is the right career for them
- Discover whether they prefer a primary or secondary setting
- Build relationships with schools they may want to work with later

For schools:

Learn how to offer school experience: [Manage School Experience | GOV.UK](#)

For prospective teachers:

Request school experience: [Search for School Experience | GOV.UK](#)

Teaching 
Every Lesson Shapes a Life



Department
for Education

Celebrating a Strong Start and Shared Purpose



Emily Hatcher
ECTP Secondary Strategic Lead

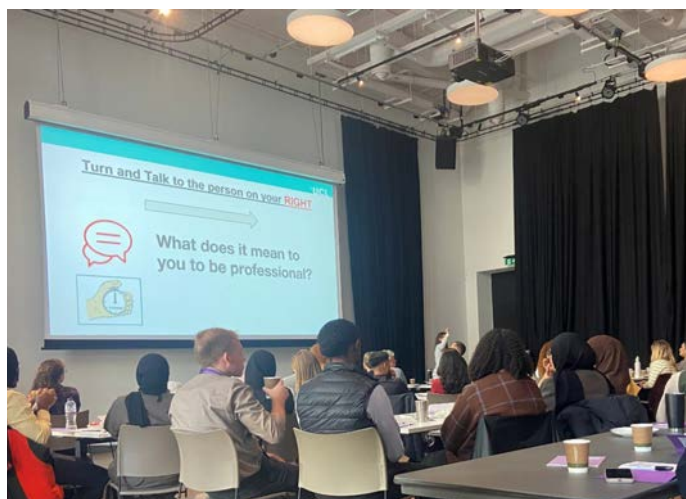


Our Year 1 Early Career Teachers (ECTs) kicked off their professional journey last half term by attending their very first facilitated learning session with the Hub. The atmosphere was buzzing with enthusiasm as new teachers came together to begin an exciting year of growth, collaboration and discovery on the ECT Programme.

During the session, ECTs were introduced to the programme structure and what to expect over the coming months, setting the stage for an inspiring and supportive year ahead. The focus of this first module, "Fulfilling Professional Responsibilities," centred on the theme of professionalism and exploring what it looks like in the day-to-day life of a teacher.

ECTs took part in a series of dynamic and interactive activities, including a lively "speed dating" round and moments of individual reflection. Each activity encouraged participants to share their experiences, exchange ideas, and apply new learning to their own unique school settings and contexts.

By the end of the session, our ECTs left with a clear understanding of the blended learning approach, both online and in-person, which is designed to fit around their teaching. They felt inspired and empowered, ready to take on the year ahead with confidence. Many also commented on how valuable it was to connect with fellow ECTs and begin building networks of support that will strengthen as the programme progresses. Here's what ECTs had to say:



"What a fantastic introduction! Brilliant content, amazing energy and **so nice to work with other teachers and share ideas** and stories! Looking forward to more of this! It's so rewarding!"

"The facilitated learning sessions have been **engaging and informative, particularly in how they connect theory with practical teaching strategies.**"

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"Facilitated training workshops have been **engaging, relevant, and supportive**. Independent study materials are clear, accessible, and useful for reflection. The programme has helped deepen my understanding of pedagogy and classroom management. Networking opportunities with other ECTs have been valuable for sharing experiences and ideas."

ELTSH's ECT Programme, delivered in partnership with UCL Centre for Educational Leadership, is rooted in evidence-informed professional learning. We are proud to have supported 1,500 ECTs across Hackney and Tower Hamlets since 2021 as they start their careers and create lasting change in schools.

We're eager to hear more from our ECTs as they engage with the updated UCL Extend platform, and we look forward to their insights through the end-of-module completion forms. Their feedback will play a vital role in shaping and enhancing the programme experience for all participants.



ECTs networking during a fantastic week of Autumn 2025 welcome events

ELTSH's ECTP local partners



ELTSH ECT & Mentor Primary Welcome Events

Primary-phase ECTs and Mentors studying with us this year were invited to a series of engaging online and in-person facilitated training events in Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

These sessions marked the beginning of an exciting journey for new participants and provided valuable structure for those continuing in the programme.

The events were a resounding success, thanks to meticulous planning and interactive activities that encouraged connection and collaboration. Emma Burton, ELTSH Primary ECTP and AB Strategic Lead, attended the Year 1 in-person welcome event led by our local partner THEP and praised the facilitators:

"The meticulous planning by the two THEP facilitators ensured the event ran smoothly. Key highlights included the interactive activities, which gave new ECTs the opportunity to get to know each other and connect. There was a great sense of community among the new ECTs."

All of our welcome sessions are designed to do more than share information; they create spaces for meaningful connections and prioritise the wellbeing of every ECT. Participants left knowing exactly where to turn for support, with clarity on ECT entitlements, expectations, and practical strategies to manage workload effectively. We were pleased by the high levels of attendance and active participation at these events. Networking opportunities were plentiful, enabling ECTs and mentors across the region to build relationships that will support them throughout their career.

Year 2 ECTs and mentors were introduced to practitioner inquiries, which provide crucial opportunities for ECTs to integrate research-informed learning into their own teaching practice. This marks a pivotal final year of the ECT programme—a stage where we see the passion and dedication of our ECTs driving improvements in teaching quality across our schools."



Emma Burton
ECTP and AB Strategic Lead

Building Strong ECT and Mentor Partnerships for Teacher Success



Adele Page
ECTE Strategic
Lead



Left: Tower Hamlets primary school mentors explore together how they can support their ECTs to thrive

Over three days, ELTSH were delighted to welcome more than 80 mentors to our Early Career Teacher (ECT) Mentor Development sessions hosted at Mulberry Academy London Dock. ECT Year 1 mentors were introduced to the new ECT Programme (ECTP) and Leading ECT Development. They engaged in rich discussions, explored the online learning platform UCL Extend, shared experiences and addressed common mentoring challenges. We also explored the UCL ONSIDE and educative mentoring models, which position mentors alongside their ECTs — noticing practice together, analysing evidence and using purposeful dialogue to build professional judgment. These models emphasise learning through inquiry rather than direction, reinforcing how powerful high-quality mentoring can be in shaping confident, reflective teachers. Strong and trusting mentor–ECT relationships are proven to enhance teacher growth and, ultimately, lead to better outcomes for learners. When mentors model curiosity, compassion and professional expertise, ECTs feel empowered to do the same in their classrooms.



Above: Primary and secondary school mentors in Tower Hamlets and Hackney explore the ONSIDE and educative mentoring models with ELTSH facilitator, Saiqua Zaneb

Staffroom podcast

If you've been inspired by the professional learning that mentors at East London Teaching School Hub receive and want to learn more, tune in to the latest episode of UCL's Staffroom podcast, where conversations about continuous professional learning take place.

In one of the latest episodes, Dr Tessa Blair (ELTSH's Deputy Director) shares how mentors can support the development of positive orientations to learning.

[Listen here: Learning Teaching: Why Mindset Matters and What This Means for Mentors | The Staffroom: S06E02](#)



Appropriate Body Services

Appropriate Body in Action: Supporting Schools and Championing Best Practice



Emma Burton
ECTP and AB Strategic Lead

Our Appropriate Body service is a key part of the work of East London Teaching School Hub. The Appropriate Body carries out visits to at least 10% of registered schools delivering a school-based ECT programme. Our visits include schools where we are reviewing induction arrangements, extended support plans or reduced induction requests. We also visit schools delivering exceptional induction experiences to learn from and share best practice across our community. Quality assurance visits are supportive and aim to ensure induction processes are robust, celebrate good practice, and identify areas for development. School Induction Tutors tell us these visits help safeguard both the school and the ECT by reducing the risk of issues arising from incomplete induction processes.

Ronel Molloy, Induction Tutor at Homleigh Primary School, shares their insight



Ronel sharing ECT feedback in a post lesson discussion

"As a new Induction Lead, the QA visit helped me clarify the distinct roles of Induction Tutor and Mentor. Holding both positions can be challenging, especially when managing documentation, report writing, and recording mentor meetings.

I found the visit by Emma Burton, ELTSH AB Strategic Lead, extremely supportive. It reassured us that the school has a robust induction process, fairness in assessment, and also highlighted areas for improvement. The process reinforced the importance of focusing on existing evidence of the ECT's work and professional development, while remaining mindful of teacher well-being and workload.

As a mentor, the QA visit emphasised the value of mentor quality, efficient preparation for ECT meetings, and the impact this has on an ECT's progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards. Overall, the experience was both supportive and informative for the school."

Ronel Molloy, Holmleigh Primary School

MAKING INCLUSION REAL: WHY THE NPQ SENCO MATTERS

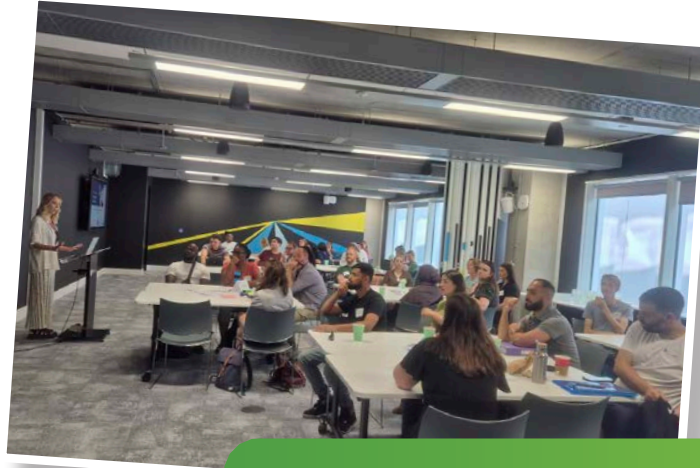


Deborah Gostling
NPQ Strategic Lead

Did you know that over 1.7 million pupils in England have identified special educational needs? The ongoing national debate about the cost and timing of SEND reforms means

schools need strong, informed inclusion leadership now more than ever. Inclusive education is everyone's responsibility, but SENCOs are the linchpin. These vital members of our school teams command vast skill sets and lead the implementation of complex strategies that shape the experience of every child.

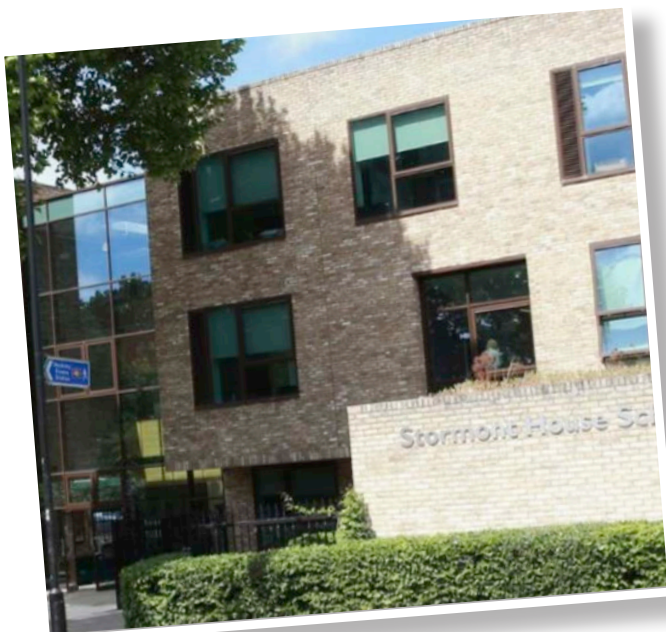
We are about to start our third cohort of the new National Professional Qualification for SENCOs (NPQ SENCO). This programme is designed to help SENCOs, senior leaders, and aspiring SENCO leaders develop a strategic approach and lead this vital area of work with confidence and clarity. The focus on SEND leadership enables participants to influence a school culture beyond their inclusion teams, ensuring every learner feels seen, understood, and supported.



NPQ
participants
prepare for
summative
assessments

One recent ELTSH NPQSENCo participant captured the impact perfectly:

"I can't believe how aligned the course is to the development of my leadership role. The course has enabled me to put in place rigorous new practices that have improved the quality of how we identify SEND and how we manage behaviour according to each child's individual need—as well as our unique school culture."



We are grateful to Stormont House School who host and facilitate many of our NPQSENCO sessions.

This isn't about ticking boxes. It's about embedding inclusive practices that make a difference every day—whether that's improving identification of needs, shaping whole-school strategies, or ensuring families feel part of the journey. We all know that when SENCOs are empowered to lead, the ripple effect reaches every classroom.

The NPQ SENCO also creates space for reflection and collaboration, which is vital to sustain such a busy frontline role. One of our participants commented, 'the facilitators for this NPQ are excellent and their depth of knowledge and experience is so great for us to learn from!'. Participants learn alongside peers who share similar challenges, building a network of support that lasts beyond the course. In a time of change and uncertainty, that sense of community matters more than ever.

Exciting Opportunity: UCL Postgraduate Leadership Bursary Scheme

ELTSH is proud to be a delivery partner for UCL's Early Career Teacher Programme (ECTP) and National Professional Qualification (NPQ) programmes. This partnership means that if you are a mentor, induction tutor, facilitator, leader, or headteacher actively working with us, you are eligible to apply for an incredible opportunity.

UCL is offering 75% funding to successful candidates to complete a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. As the only university Lead Provider, UCL is delighted to make this opportunity available to our network.

This bursary is open to ECT and NPQ mentors, facilitators, induction tutors, and headteachers.

Click [here](#) to watch the promotional video

Click [here](#) to access the flyer and application form



Key dates:

Application deadline:

24 April 2026 (for September 2026 start)

Successful applicants notified by:

15 May 2026

Follow us on social media to keep up with all the latest ELTSH events and information



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*Connecting
Hackney and
Tower Hamlets
Schools*

Contact us

Please do contact us if you have any queries or questions:

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For National Professional Qualification enquiries: npq@eastlondontsh.org

For Appropriate Body enquiries: ab@eastlondontsh.org

For ITT enquiries: ITT@eastlondontsh.org

For all other enquiries: info@eastlondontsh.org

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