

ECTs – what leaders need to know about the newer teachers in their school

The first half term is done – and for Early Career Teachers, that’s no small achievement!

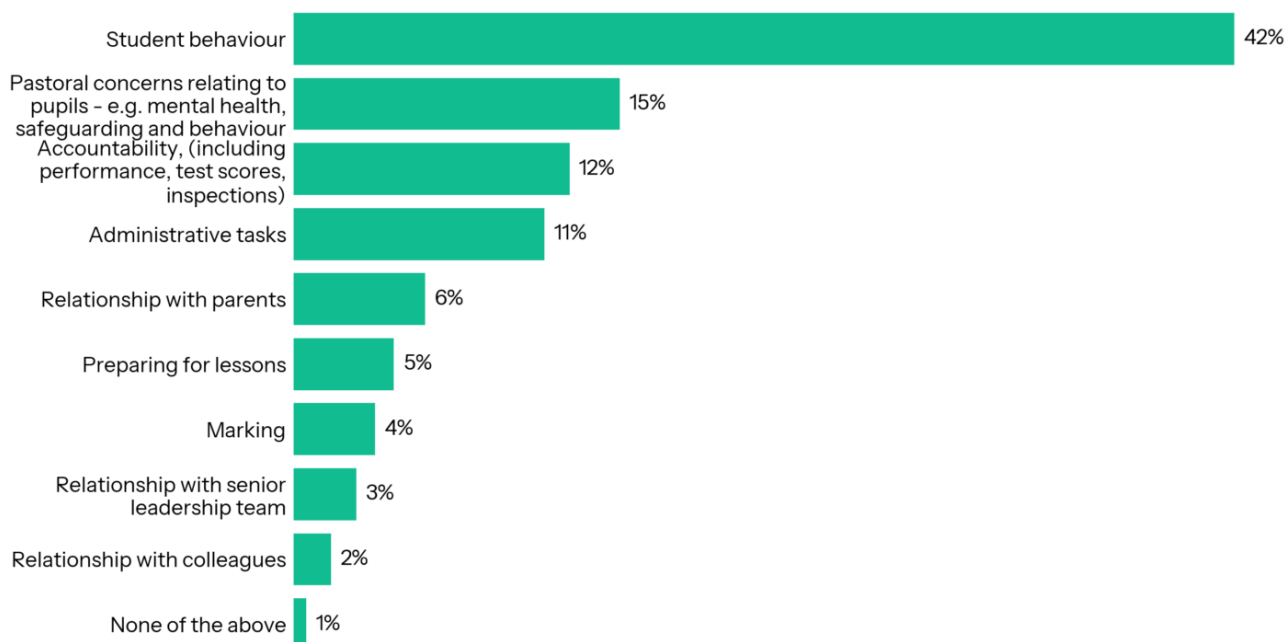
At Teacher Tapp, we’ve been following their journey: the hopes, the challenges, and how schools are supporting them along the way.

Here’s what the data tells us about how ECTs are really getting on – and what school leaders might want to reflect on.

1. Expectations vs Reality: Where the stress really lies

Before the year began, 42% of ECTs expected behaviour to be the toughest part of the job.

What do you anticipate will be the most challenging part of teaching?



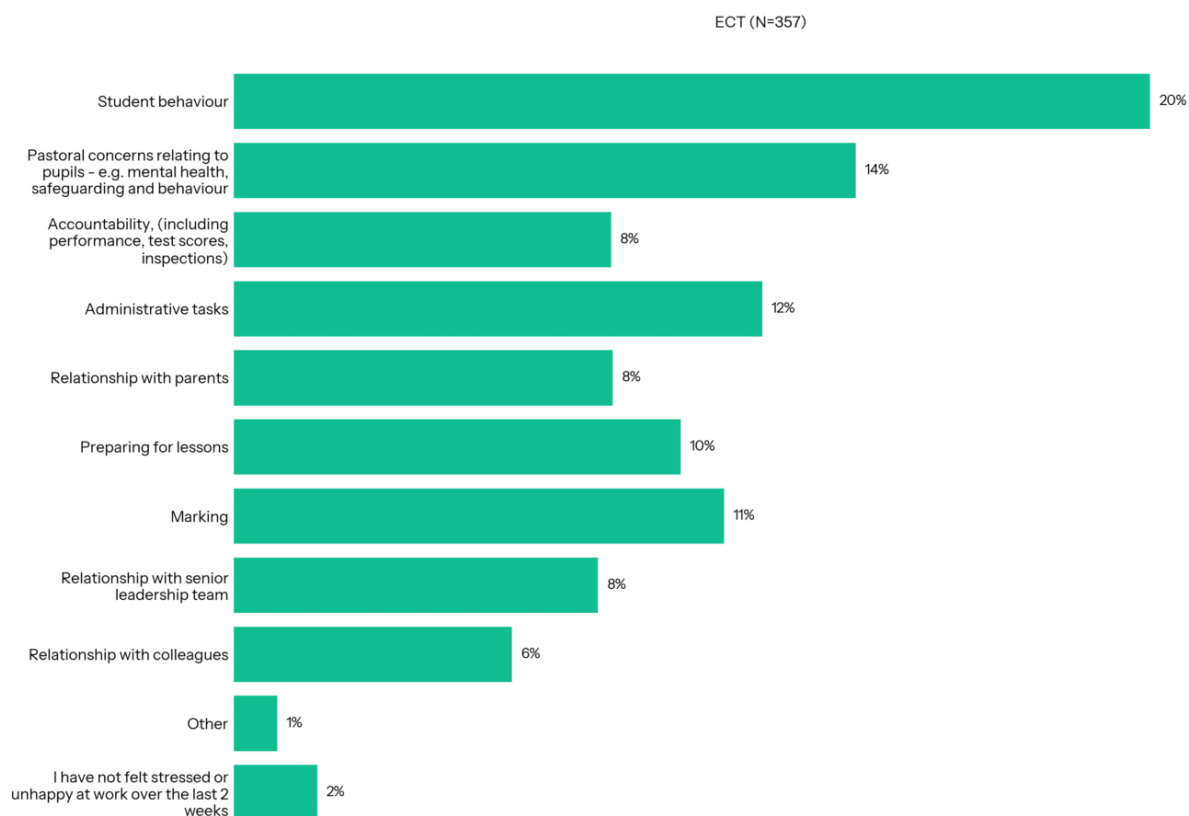
Question answered by 354 teachers on 24th September 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

A few weeks in, that prediction proved correct – behaviour remained the top cause of stress (20%).

However, once term started, other challenges also loomed larger than expected.

- Pastoral issues (e.g. safeguarding, student wellbeing) and admin tasks rose sharply as stressors.
- Marking and planning also proved tougher in practice (11% and 10% vs 4% and 5% expected).
- Only 2% of ECTs said they hadn't felt stressed at all.

Have any of the following caused you to feel stressed or unhappy at work over the last 2 weeks?

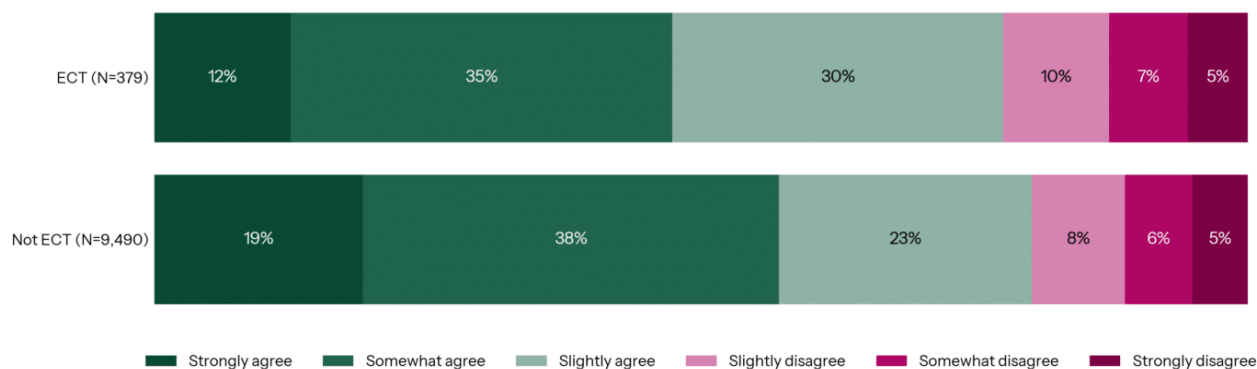


Question answered by 357 teachers on 18th October 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

However, facing challenges are to be expected (after all, if teaching was an easy job, there wouldn't be any issue recruiting teachers!). So perhaps it's more important to check ECTs feel confident speaking up about the problems they face.

In this respect, it isn't good news. ECTs are less likely to feel they can raise problems with leaders (12% "strongly agree" vs 19% of experienced staff).

Members of staff at my school are able to raise problems and tough issues with leadership



Question answered by 9,869 teachers on 4th November 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

■ ■ What leaders can do

- Encourage ECTs to speak up if something feels wrong – ECTs may hesitate to raise concerns if they fear judgment.
- Create open channels of communication between leadership and teaching staff – make it easy for staff to approach leaders with problems.
- Keep an eye on student behaviour around ECTs – are newer teachers given back up where they need it?

2. Mentoring matters – but consistency is key

The entitlement to regular mentor meetings is one of the cornerstones of the ECF, but implementation varies:

- 41% of ECTs meet mentors in a separate room.
- Only 10% have a booked or timetabled space.
- 62% have had a mentor meeting or observation cancelled and not rearranged.

It's worth checking how reliable and private your mentoring structure feels from the ECT's perspective.

A quiet room and a protected slot might sound small – but they send a powerful message: this time matters.

■ ■ What leaders can do

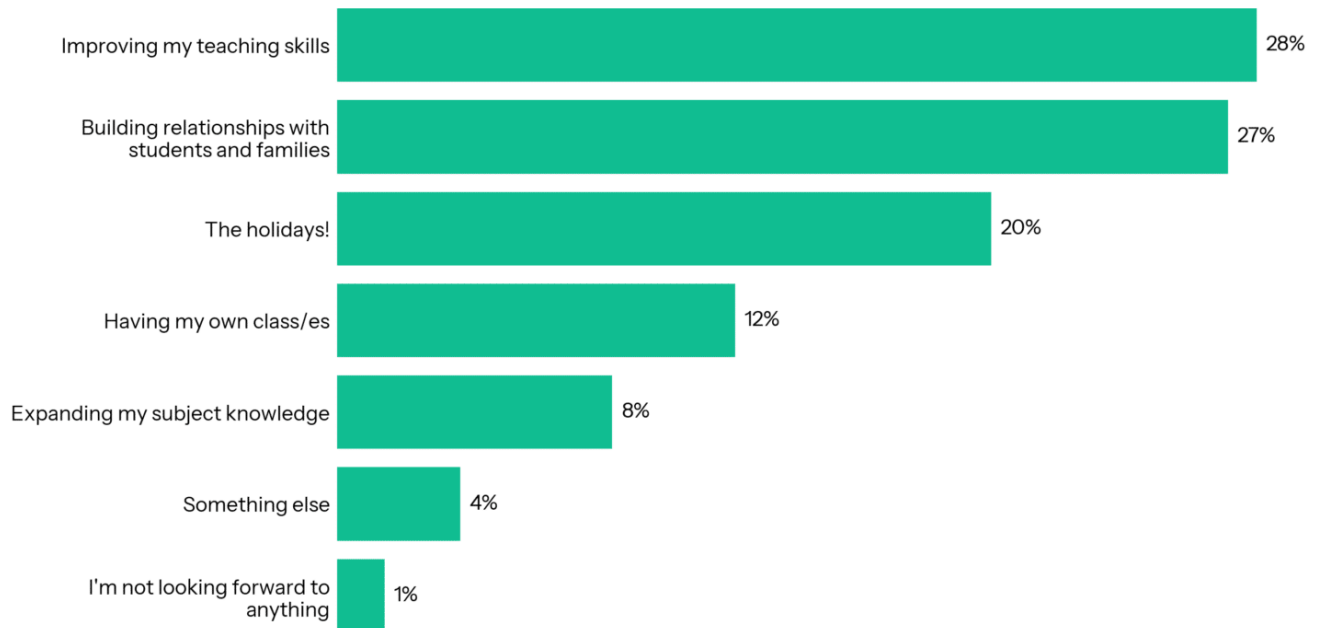
- Protect mentor meeting time as sacrosanct, and ensure it's recorded on timetables for both parties.
- Provide a private space – even a quiet corner – where ECTs can speak openly without fear of being overheard.
- Encourage mentors to treat sessions as reflective coaching, not just administrative catch-ups.

3. ECTs Are enthusiastic – but classroom realities bite

Almost every ECT (99%) said they had things they were looking forward to this year – most often improving their teaching (28%) and building relationships (27%).

Their enthusiasm is genuine, but they're managing steeper behaviour challenges. Extra visibility, coaching, and calm reassurance from senior staff can make a huge difference.

What are you most looking forward to doing this year?



Question answered by 349 teachers on 30th September 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

But the daily classroom picture shows why many find the early months exhausting:

- Twice as many ECTs as non-ECTs reported that half or more of their class misbehaved in their last lesson (18% vs 8%).
- Only 19% of ECTs said most or all students completed their last homework, compared with 25% of non-ECTs.

■ ■ What leaders can do

- Make sure ECTs know they're not alone when dealing with behaviour – visible senior presence and swift follow-up on incidents go a long way.
- Encourage staff to share strategies and successes, not just challenges.
- Recognise that a calm "drop-in and debrief" from a trusted leader can rebuild confidence after a tough lesson.

4. What ECTs think would improve behaviour

When asked how behaviour could be improved, ECTs and experienced teachers agreed on one key point:

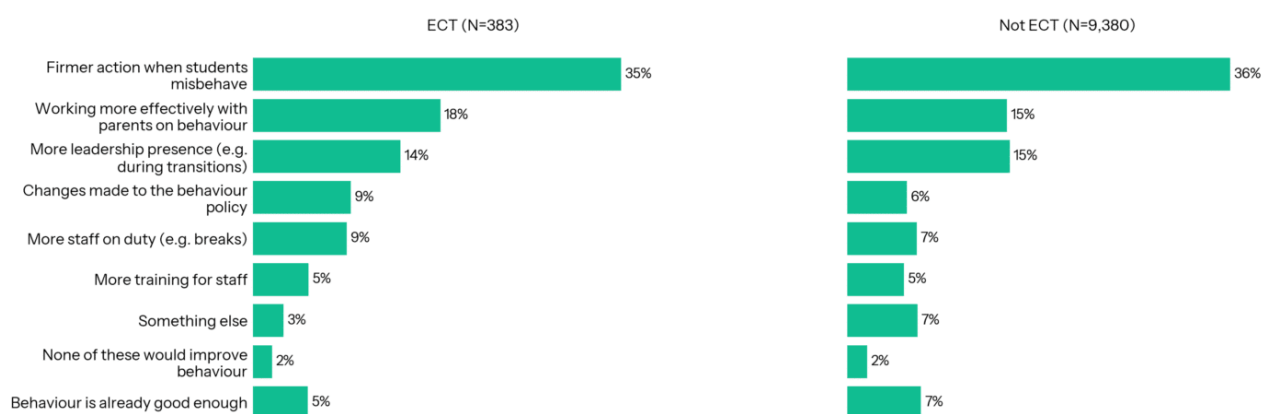
■ ■ Firmer action when students misbehave tops the list for both groups.

But ECTs also showed a stronger desire for visible and joined-up support:

- Working more effectively with parents (18% vs 15%)
- More leadership presence during transitions (14%)
- Adjustments to the behaviour policy (9% vs 6%)

This points to a need for clear systems, visible leadership, and collective consistency – helping ECTs feel they're not tackling behaviour alone.

What action do you think would do the most to improve behaviour in your school?



Question answered by 9,763 teachers on 4th November 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

This suggests new teachers want clearer systems and visible support from leaders when behaviour gets challenging – perhaps reflecting their need for confidence and consistency while they're still finding their feet.

■ ■ What leaders can do

- Be visible during key parts of the day – corridors, transitions, and ends of lessons.
- Reinforce the message that behaviour is a shared responsibility, not a test of an ECT's authority.
- Offer joint parent meetings when behaviour concerns arise, so ECTs see effective home-school partnership in action.

5. What surprised ECTs most about teaching – and how it differs from experienced teachers

Even after all the training, ECTs are still surprised by how much time goes on non-teaching tasks – 44% said so, similar to 45% of experienced staff.

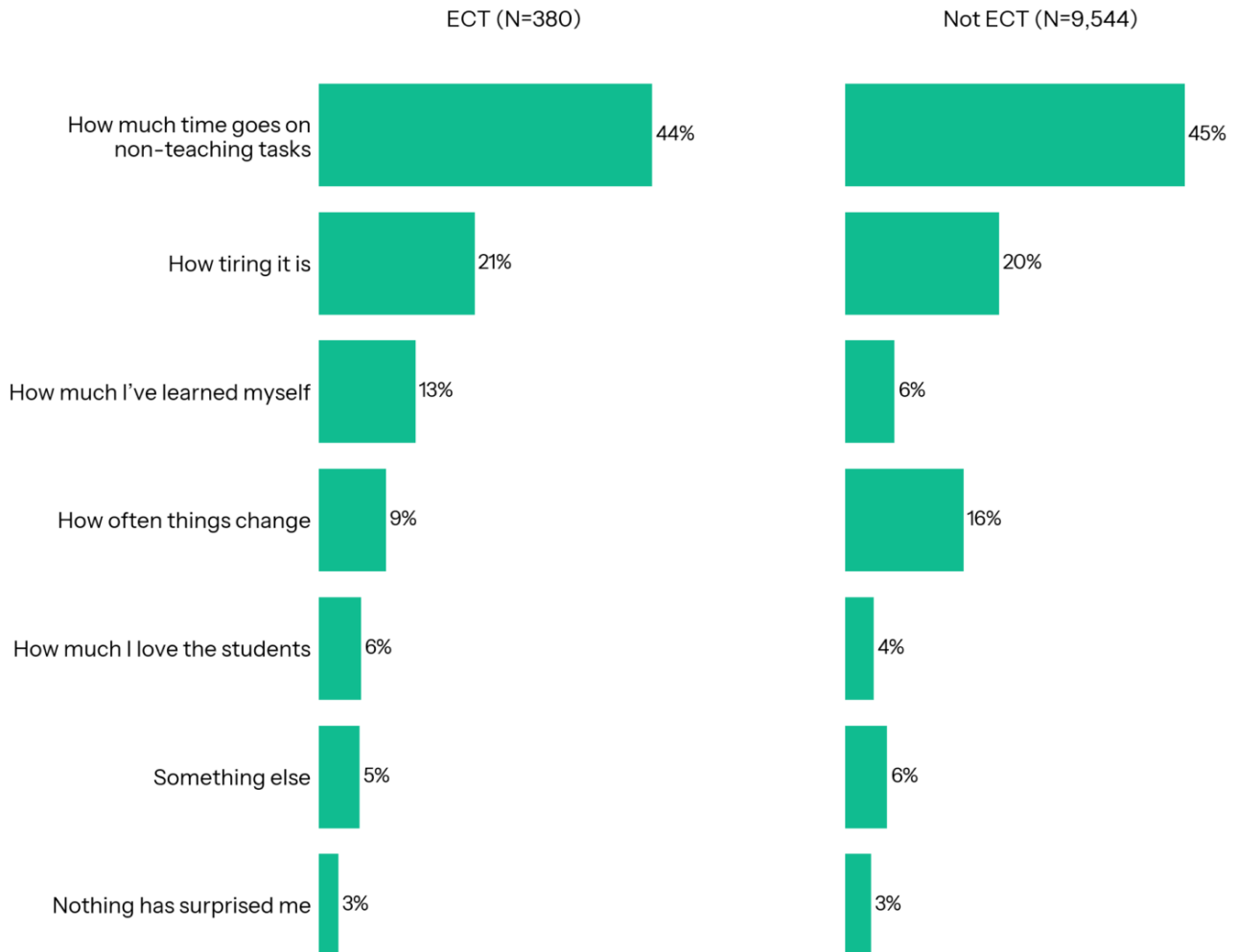
But their sense of discovery stands out:

- 13% said they were surprised by how much they've learned themselves.

- 6% mentioned how much they love the students.

The job is tougher than they imagined – but it's also more rewarding.

Which part of teaching has surprised you most?



Question answered by 9,924 teachers on 1st November 2025 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics).

This suggests early career teachers are still discovering both the emotional highs and the unexpected personal growth that come with the role.

■ ■ What leaders can do

- Help ECTs see their growth by celebrating small wins and acknowledging progress.
- Share stories from experienced staff about how long it really takes to feel confident in the role.
- Although ECTs haven't yet felt the pressure of constant change, the likelihood is that

it isn't far away...