



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional
Learning of School Leaders
and Teachers

The Post-primary NQT Voice Survey Report

June 2024



Table of Contents

Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
LIST OF FIGURES	3
LIST OF TABLES.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
SCHOOL CONTEXT	7
DROICHEAD TIMELINE	8
DROICHEAD PROCESS:	9
PST SUPPORT:.....	10
OBSERVATIONS, PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS, AND INDUCTION ACTIVITIES	11
STRAND A:	15
Professional Conversations	15
Induction Activities.....	15
STRAND B:	17
Strand B: Cluster Meetings.....	17
Strand B: Professional Learning Activity.....	18
REFLECTIONS AND TAISCE	19
NQT CONCERNS AND SUPPORTS	21
RELEASE TIME.....	23
BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF DROICHEAD	24
THE DROICHEAD INDUCTION DIVISION WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	26
SHARING FURTHER COMMENTS.....	27



POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE28

CONCLUSION30



List of Figures

Figure 1: Duration of Droichead process	8
Figure 2: Who devised the Droichead Outline Plan?	9
Figure 3: How many PST members did you work with during your Droichead process?	10
Figure 4: As part of your Droichead process who did you observe?	11
Figure 5: Did you and a member of your PST engage in Pre-observation and Post-observation Conversations?	14
Figure 6: What is your overall evaluation of the Cluster Meetings?	17
Figure 7: What is your preference for engaging in Cluster Meetings?	18
Figure 8: What were your main concerns during your first year of teaching?	21
Figure 9: Who did you seek support from during your Droichead process if you had any issue/concern?	22
Figure 10: Did your school avail of Droichead Release time?	23
Figure 11: How many times did you visit the Droichead Induction Division’s websites during your Droichead process?	26

List of Tables

Table 1: School Categories	7
Table 2: Observations of PST members by NQTs	12
Table 3: Observations of non-PST members by NQTs	12
Table 4: Observations of NQTs by their PST	13
Table 5: Advice for NQTs	28
Table 6: Advice for PST members	29



Introduction

Oide, the school support service for teachers and school leaders, was formed in September 2023 from the integration of four existing support services, namely the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

In a role formerly fulfilled by the NIPT, the Droichead Induction Division now operationalises Droichead, the Teaching Council's integrated professional induction framework for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs). The Teaching Council's policy on induction – *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework (2017)*, states that '*the main objective of the Droichead process is to support the professional learning of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) during the induction phase, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and learning for the next phase of their career*'.

The Droichead Induction Division provides training for Professional Support Team (PST) members to enable schools to support NQTs through their Droichead process. The PST members guide and advise NQTs during school-based induction, in the first stages of their professional journey. To date, the Droichead Induction Division has trained approx. 3,500 Post-primary PST members in over 700 post-primary schools.

During the 2023.2024 academic year, a total of 2,056 post-primary NQTs from 630 schools applied to engage in the Droichead process. To hear the voice and experience of these NQTs, the Droichead Induction Division gathered both qualitative and quantitative data on all aspects of the Droichead process by distributing an NQT Voice Survey to them.

The purpose of the NQT Voice Survey was to afford NQTs who had engaged in Droichead in the 2023.2024 academic year the opportunity to proffer authentic, candid, insightful and valuable feedback about their lived experiences of the Droichead induction process. The information gleaned could then be used, as required by the Droichead Induction Division to support the enhancement of the Droichead process for future NQTs and to inform and augment the support and training provided to schools, school leaders and PST members going forward.

The NQT Voice Survey was created cross-sectorally, and the same questions were asked of both primary and post-primary NQTs, apart from a small number of sector-specific questions pertaining, in the main to preparation for teaching and learning at primary level. The questionnaire examined the Droichead experience of NQTs, gathering data in relation to key aspects of the process, namely:

- School Context and Droichead Timeline
- The Droichead Process and PST Support
- Strand A: Observations, Professional Conversations, Induction Activities
- Strand B: Cluster Meetings and Additional Professional Learning Activities
- Reflections and Taisce: Portfolio-based Learning
- NQT Concerns and Supports
- Words of Wisdom for NQTs and PST Members

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) agreement between the Teaching Council and Oide, the email addresses for NQTs contacted were shared by the Teaching Council with the Droichead Induction Division.

The questionnaire was divided into 43 questions and the responses of the 101 NQTs who completed it follow.

School Context

The Droichead setting for each NQT was initially investigated. The school category and DEIS status breakdown of each respondent is detailed in the table below:

School category		DEIS status of school	
Alternative Educational Setting	1%	DEIS	41%
Community and Comprehensive	19%	Non - DEIS	59%
Educate Together Secondary School	9%	Context	
ETB School	33%	English Medium	97%
Voluntary Secondary School	37%	Gaelcholáiste	3%
Other	1%	Special School	
		No	97%
		Yes	3%

Table 1: School Categories

Droichead Timeline

The questionnaire explored the duration of the Droichead process for NQTs.

- 96% had completed their Droichead process at the time of the survey completion:

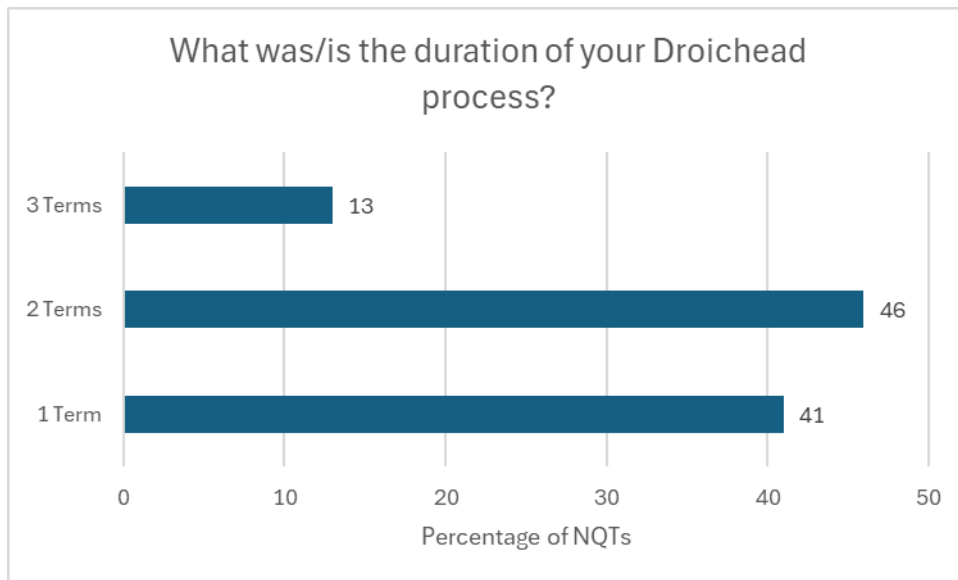


Figure 1: Duration of Droichead process

Droichead Process:

Outline Plan:

- 85% of respondents had an outline plan.
- The majority of those respondents who had an outline plan devised this in collaboration with their PST (over 53%).
- 18% of respondents devised their outline plan themselves; while 14% stated that their outline plan was devised by their PST.

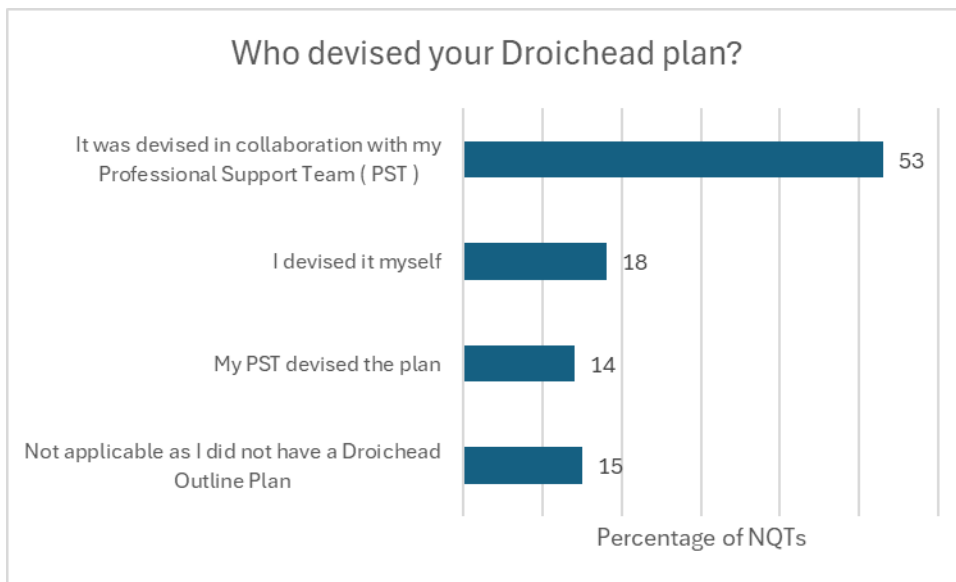


Figure 2: Who devised the Droichead Outline Plan?

PST Support:

- The majority of NQTs worked in collaboration with 2 PST Members as shown in the chart below.
- 6% worked with 1 PST member in their school. In these cases, the use of an external/inter-school model was used.

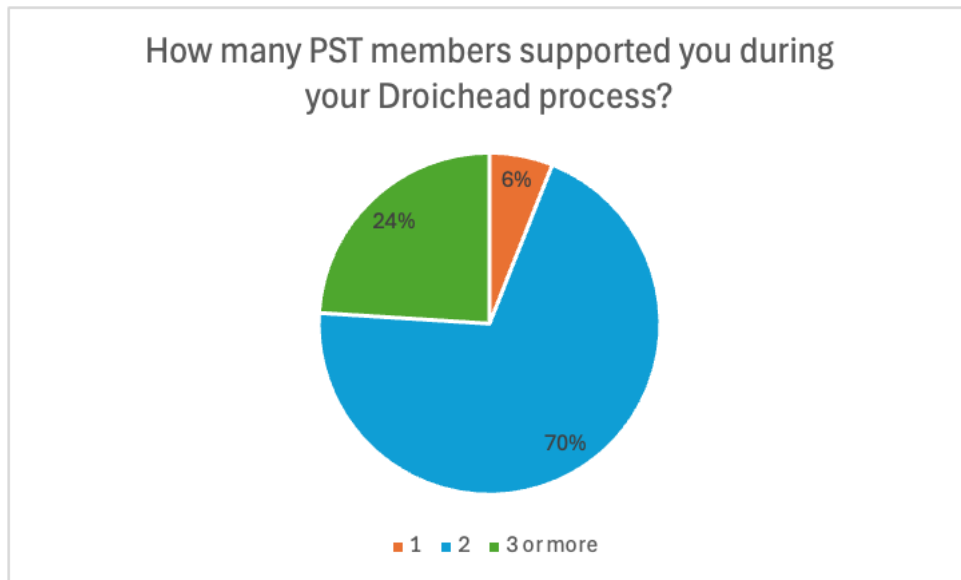


Figure 3: How many PST members did you work with during your Droichead process?

Observations, Professional Conversations, and Induction Activities

Observations are a key feature of Droichead. This includes observations **by** the NQT of more experienced teachers' practice, as well as observation **of** the NQT's practice by the PST. Both types of observations are arranged in advance and provide NQTs with opportunities to learn from their fellow professionals. It is recommended that there would be at least two of each type of classroom observation (observations **by** the NQT, and observations **of** the NQT's practice), and that the exact number, and the classes observed, should be based on discussions between the NQT and the PST.

The questionnaire posed a series of questions about the NQTs' experiences of observations as part of their Droichead process.

- The majority of NQTs (over 61%) observed both their PST and other experienced teachers, although 24% stated that they observed only members of the PST.

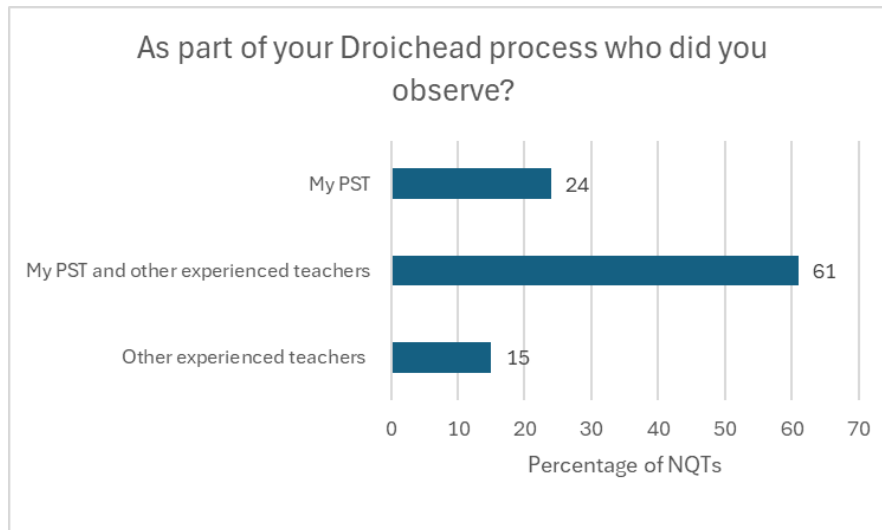


Figure 4: As part of your Droichead process who did you observe?

Observations by NQTs of their PST:

Number of observations of PST members	Percentage of NQTs
0	1%
1	18%
2	71%
3 - 4	6%
5 or more	4%

Table 2: Observations of PST members by NQTs

Observations of non-PST members by NQTs:

Number of observations of other teachers (non-PST)	Percentage of NQTs
0	2%
1	28%
2	47%
3 - 4	12%
5 or more	11%

Table 3: Observations of non-PST members by NQTs

Observations of NQTs by PST members:

Number of observations of NQTs by their PST	Percentage of NQTs
0	0%
1	2%
2	98%
3 - 4	0%
5 or more	0%

Table 4: Observations of NQTs by their PST

The observation process involves a three-stage approach: Pre-observation, Observation and Post-observation Conversations.

As seen in the figure below, 87% of NQTs engaged in both pre-observation and post-observation conversations.

As part of the observation process, below are the average percentages of NQTs that engaged in:

Pre-observation conversations – 87 %

Post-observation conversations – 97 %

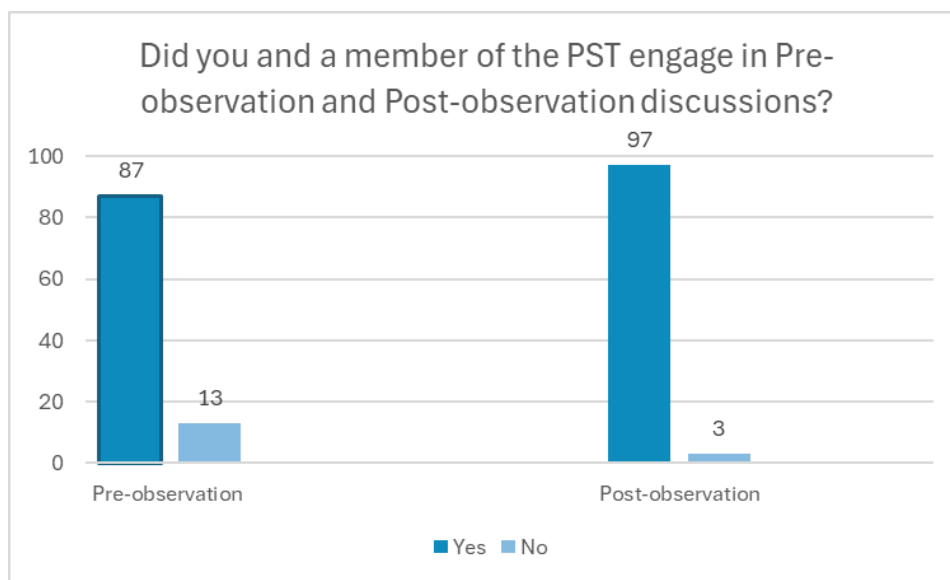


Figure 5: Did you and a member of your PST engage in Pre-observation and Post-observation Conversations?

Strand A:

Professional Conversations

During the Droichead process, an NQT has several interactions with experienced colleagues who are supporting the process. These are called professional conversations. 94% of NQTs responded that they had engaged in professional conversations during their Droichead process.

Induction Activities

In this section of the questionnaire, the types and timing of induction activities offered to NQTs in their schools were explored.

Induction activities offered to NQTs included:

- Welcome meeting/tour of school
- Regular meetings with PST/professional conversations
- Familiarisation with key school policies/IT platforms
- Meetings with subject departments/senior management
- Lesson observation
- Team Teaching
- In-school CPD (e.g., JCT days)

71% of NQTs responded that they and/or their PST recorded their induction activities in a dedicated document.

78% of respondents felt that these induction activities supported their needs as an NQT.

Respondents were asked to mention induction activities other than observations with which they engaged. These included:

- Department Meetings
- Extra-curricular and Co-curricular activities such as clubs and field trips
- Staff Meetings
- New Teachers' Meetings/Induction Days

- Induction Workshops
- Social committee
- Workshops
- Féilte 2023
- Green Schools Committee

When asked if they had any further comments in relation to induction activities some of the comments included:

- *Extremely pleased with the overall process and I felt very supported in my NQT year.*
- *I have always been supported and guided.*
- *Found overall induction insightful however, as I work in a smaller subject department with one other colleague much of my subject specific induction was informal.*
- *Process was worthwhile for further development as a teacher.*
- *All the induction activities were very useful, additional info was gradually given when needed.*
- *Meetings focused on giving feedback, following behavior policy etc. which were really helpful.*
- *They were all very useful and the school provided extra support.*
- *An in-depth code of behaviour training would be welcomed. Feedback from experienced teachers about the culture and challenges of the school.*

Strand B:

Strand B: Cluster Meetings

NQTs engage in one cluster meeting per term of their Droichead process. The number of cluster meetings an NQT must attend is determined by the duration of the Droichead process which is determined in consultation with their PST. 49% of NQTs evaluated the cluster meetings as 'Helpful' or 'Very Helpful' as shown in the figure below.

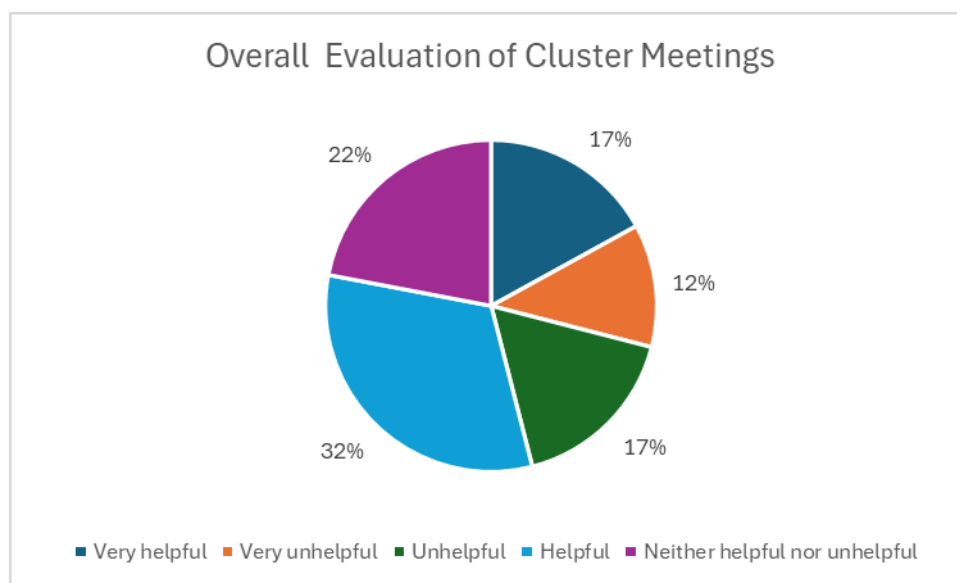


Figure 6: What is your overall evaluation of the Cluster Meetings?

NQTs suggested the following topics would be useful if addressed at future cluster meetings. It should be acknowledged that a lot of the suggested topics are incorporated into other cluster meetings:

- Teacher wellbeing
- Differentiation
- Parent-teacher meetings
- Supporting students with additional needs
- Talking to other NQTs
- Classroom management

- Societal challenges and dealing with parents
- Subject specific help
- Practical things like payslips, different types of contracts etc which are not covered in college

Finally, more than half of respondents demonstrated a preference for engaging in cluster meetings online via Zoom as shown below:

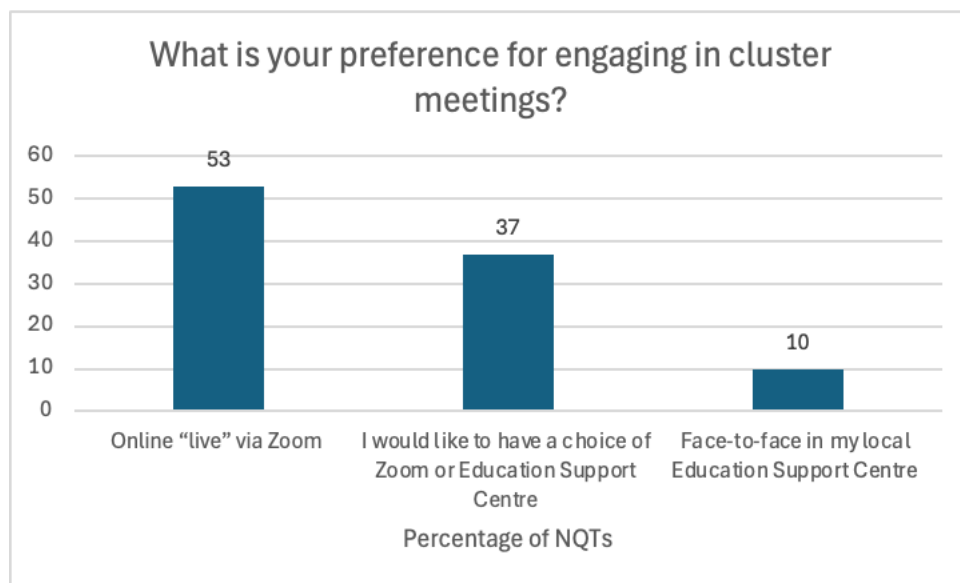


Figure 7: What is your preference for engaging in Cluster Meetings?

Strand B: Professional Learning Activity

NQTs must engage in one additional professional learning activity (APLA) as part of the Droichead process. This section of the survey explored what professional learning activities were identified and if those activities supported the professional learning needs of NQTs. NQTs engaged in the following professional learning activities:

- Webinars and workshops
- Féilte
- Oide CPD
- Restorative practice training
- Journaling

- INOTE conference
- SLAR meetings
- First aid courses
- Coding

54% of NQTs decided on their professional learning activity in collaboration with their PST, and 78% of respondents felt that the professional learning activity addressed one of their emerging needs.

Further comments in relation to the APLA included:

- *It was useful.*
- *It was very informative, and I participated together with fellow department colleagues as a group.*
- *I will continue to examine the behavioural aspect of classroom management as this is of great interest to me.*
- *It is vital to maintain professional learning as there are always new things appearing and worthwhile practicing.*
- *It is sometimes challenging to find Subject Specific CPD however found my chosen PLA very insightful.*

Reflections and Taisce

In this section of the questionnaire, portfolio-based learning (Taisce) was explored.

- 93% of NQTs in the questionnaire maintained a Taisce
- 46% of these NQTs chose to share elements of their Taisce with their PST
- 61% of these NQTs believed that reflections from their Taisce benefitted their daily professional practice.

The following means of maintaining a Taisce were listed by respondents (from most to least popular):

- On a laptop
- Google Drive/OneDrive/online
- A physical notebook/journal
- A scrapbook/folder

NQTs made the following observations in relation to Taisce:

- *It is a useful tool.*
- *I found a less formal Taisce a benefit rather than formal reflections.*
- *It is very useful, especially for reflection pieces that will help me next year when planning specific lessons.*
- *I find it useful to keep and continue developing Taisce materials.*
- *I found it to be very helpful.*
- *Provided a fresh perspective on teaching and learning.*
- *It is a thing that accumulates achievements you can be proud of.*

When asked if they found Taisce beneficial in terms of their professional practice, 61% said they found it helpful and 25% said they found it somewhat helpful with 14% citing it did not impact on their professional practice.

NQT Concerns and Supports

Respondents were asked to identify the main concerns that they had in their first year of teaching. As can be seen below, classroom management and supporting students with SEN were the top concerns for NQTs during their first year of teaching.

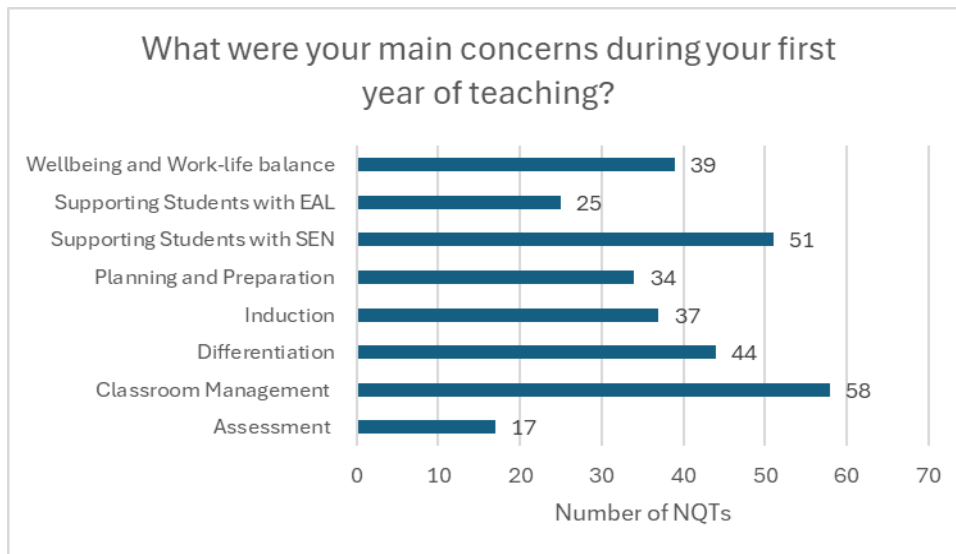


Figure 8: What were your main concerns during your first year of teaching?

NQTs most frequently sought support from their PST, other colleagues and/or school management as shown below.

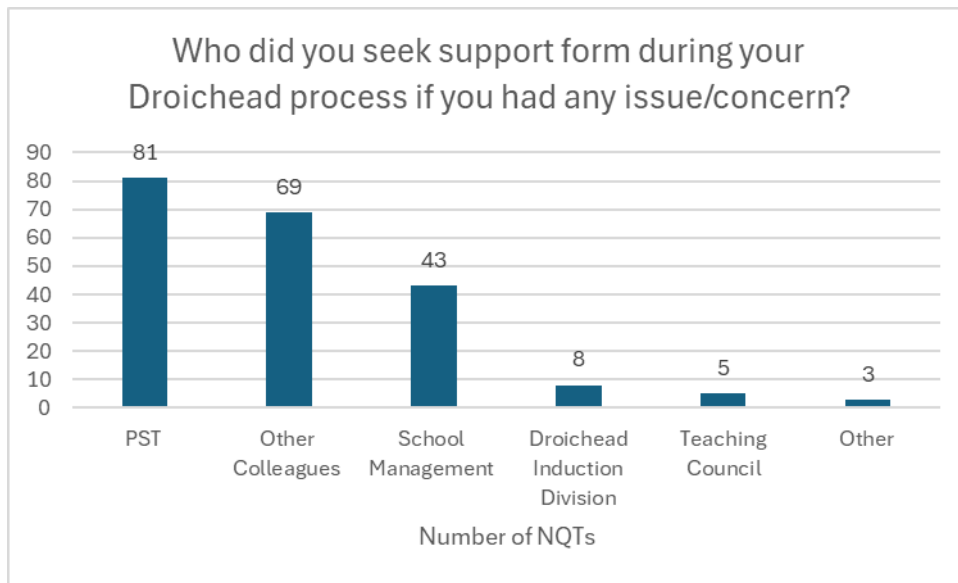


Figure 9: Who did you seek support from during your Droichead process if you had any issue/concern?

NQTs also had the option to mention other supports not listed and mentioned their partners and friends who had completed the Droichead process previously.

Release Time

50% of NQTs responded that their schools availed of Droichead release time to support them as shown below:

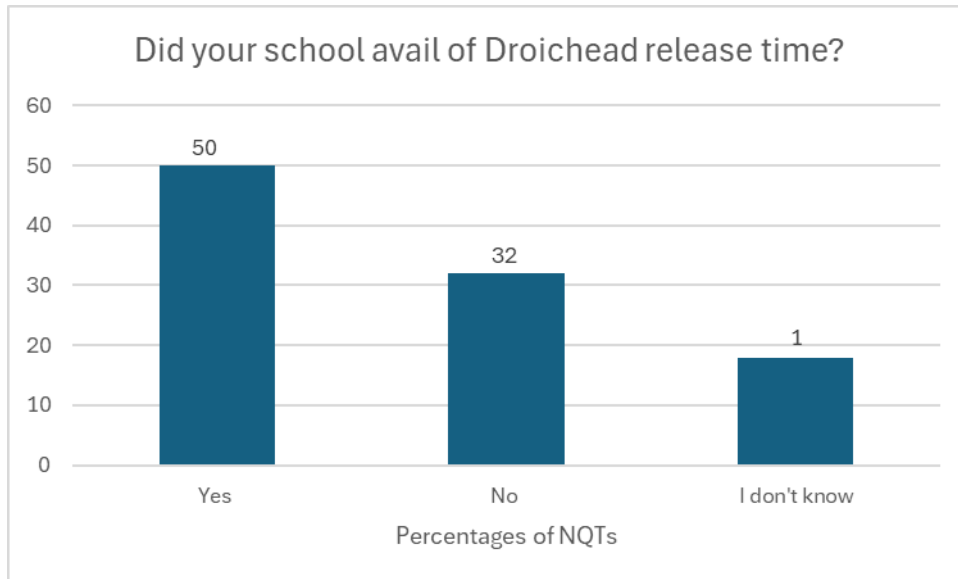


Figure 10: Did your school avail of Droichead Release time?

Benefits and Challenges of Droichead

The main objective of the Droichead process is to support the professional learning of NQTs during the induction phase. This section of the questionnaire intended to capture the benefits and challenges of the Droichead process for NQTs. NQTs suggested a number of recurring themes.

In terms of benefits, NQTs listed the following:

- *Observing other teachers' practice.*
- *Support from other teachers.*
- *Reflecting on my experiences in my Taisce.*
- *Getting feedback from another teacher.*
- *Chatting to other NQTs.*
- *Observations and professional conversations.*
- *The opportunity to collaborate with experienced teachers and to get to know the staff.*
- *Having a network of teachers who support you and can help with queries.*

A small minority of the respondents did not see any benefit to Droichead, mentioning the following reasons:

- *Focus was on getting it done.*
- *To be honest, I did not feel much benefit. This is partly because I completed Droichead late. Perhaps if I had done it earlier, lacking the confidence I have now, it could have been beneficial. The collaboration with colleagues was helpful though and helped strengthen our working relationships even outside Droichead.*

In terms of challenges, NQTs listed the following:

- *Finding a time that suits for observations and getting time to complete the reflections needed for Taisce. Managing my time and being organised was key to ensuring I was able to complete the Droichead process.*
- *Dealing with the workload of a full timetable.*
- *Balancing workload of Droichead with professional practice within the classroom. There is a clear separation between the Droichead and professional practice.*
- *The school not having enough cover for observations and scheduling pre/post observation meetings so could have been done in 1 term instead of 2.*
- *Finding time to meet with PST.*
- *Nothing. I found it fine.*
- *Paperwork.*
- *Going to cluster meeting 2 hours from home after a long day at work.*
- *The pressure of completing it.*
- *In all honesty, I did not find any part of the process challenging. All I had to do was attend one meeting, 2 observations, and observe twice.*
- *Obtaining employment with the necessary hours to complete the programme.*
- *Registering for a cluster meeting it was impossible to do online as I couldn't find the links and ended up ringing the education centre.*
- *Meeting deadlines - make sure all the documentation was accurate.*
- *Identifying the areas I wanted to really focus on.*

The Droichead Induction Division Website and Social Media Platforms

43% of NQTs visited the Droichead Induction Division's websites (www.teacherinduction.ie and <https://oide.ie/droichead/home/>) 2-4 times during their Droichead process, while 22% of NQTs visited one of the websites once during their Droichead process as shown below.

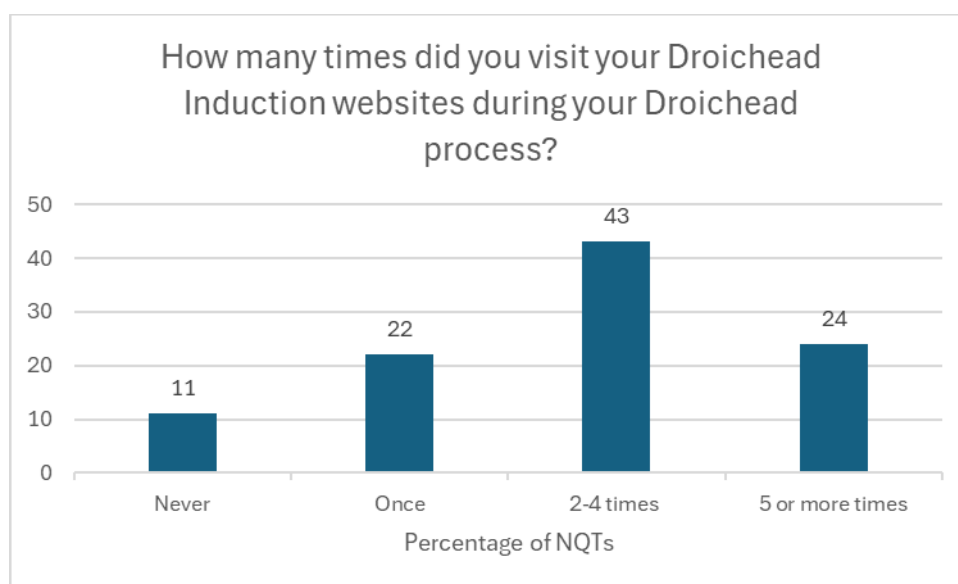


Figure 11: How many times did you visit the Droichead Induction Division's websites during your Droichead process?

The majority of NQTs in this survey suggested that the following social media platforms would reach NQTs (from most to least likely):

- Instagram (56%)
- Facebook (14%)
- X (formerly Twitter) (14%)
- TikTok (11%)

Sharing Further Comments

The last question posed asked NQTs for any further comments they had in relation to their Droichead experience.

Comments included:

- *My experience was very good, but I found the process itself and putting the pieces together a bit complicated - having a timeline or more specific instruction on this prior to the Cluster meeting could be beneficial, especially at the beginning of the academic year.*
- *No, only it's great.*
- *I'd like to share my gratitude for such a helpful process. You always have people you can rely on in the workplace.*
- *I feel that 2 meetings should be compulsory as the first is not as useful to our teaching practices as the second and third. Much of the info in cluster 2 & 3 could be beneficial earlier. As some NQTs can complete Droichead in one term they will miss the advice on planning and classroom management in these later meetings.*
- *I found it helpful.*
- *All in all, it was a positive experience, and I was pleased with the outcome.*
- *Glad to have it behind me.*
- *I found it to be a rigid and unnecessary process that I felt very pressured to complete and did not get much support from. My colleagues and PST were fantastic. This process added stress after having completed four years of schooling and two PME years. This could have been a module in my PME.*

Postcards from the Edge

The first activity in this section was an Idea Board activity. NQTs were invited to mention any words of advice they would give to NQTs completing their Droichead process in 2024.2025. The advice is collated in the table below:

Advice for NQTs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>It takes a while to settle into a new school environment but be patient. Planning is important and staying organised is key. Stay on top of your deadlines and keep a 'to-do list'.</i>● <i>It is worth it. Be organised.</i>● <i>Use it to gain knowledge of what you are unsure of. PSTs are really helpful and are there to help you on your journey as an NQT.</i>● <i>Make good use of the observations, very beneficial.</i>● <i>Have patience and take your time completing all the aspects of Droichead.</i>● <i>Keep on top of it and it will be finished quickly.</i>● <i>There are very experienced staff available to answer any questions you may have, give tips on classroom management, specific students, engagement levels etc... Asking questions of those individuals means you are not having to continuously reinvent the wheel. They are there to help and are happy to do so.</i>● <i>Connect with PST members.</i>● <i>Enjoy the process. Reflection is very important and getting advice on how to improve practice.</i>● <i>Engage with your PST, pay attention and try to make yourself as big a part of the school community as you can.</i>

Table 5: Advice for NQTs

Participants were then asked to engage in a Mentimeter activity to give advice to PST members supporting NQTs during their Droichead process. The advice is collated in the table below.

Advice for PST Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Just to ensure to check up on the NQTs to ensure they are supported, even sitting beside them at lunch etc.</i>● <i>Check in regularly, just to see how they are, sometimes it can be a tick the box exercise.</i>● <i>Be nice, kind and supportive.</i>● <i>Ensure you have a meeting after the class is over. Be honest.</i>● <i>The post-observation chat is really helpful for NQT and as much guidance that you can offer them in the area they wish to be looked at is really good.</i>● <i>Giving your honest opinion of the classroom management, teaching style, materials covered, differentiation etc is hugely valuable.</i>● <i>Keep communication going throughout the year - extremely helpful!</i>● <i>Be contactable and flexible, provide constructive feedback and be present when observing.</i>● <i>Avail of substitute release time for NQTs.</i>● <i>Be patient, understanding and kind. Teaching is a very difficult profession to start in, you were there once too.</i>● <i>Check in regularly & devise a schedule for meetings and check-ins.</i>● <i>Encourage NQTs to observe additional classes.</i>● <i>Remember you were an NQT once.</i>

Table 6: Advice for PST members

Conclusion

Feedback from the questionnaire clearly indicates that the Droichead process has been exceptionally valuable, rewarding, and worthwhile for NQTs throughout the country.

The questionnaire revealed that key messages conveyed during the Droichead Induction Division PST Training events and through cluster meetings are increasingly becoming integrated into the Droichead framework within many schools. Reflections and responses from NQTs demonstrate that a Droichead culture is beginning to emerge, characterized by an appreciation for professional dialogues, observations, and ongoing support among NQTs, PSTs, and school communities.

Data also indicates that numerous Droichead documents and protocols recommended by the Droichead Induction Division are being utilised in schools. Most NQTs either received or collaborated with their PST to create a Droichead Outline Plan, engaged in pre-observation and post-observation discussions, and identified a focus for each observation.

Overall, the majority of NQTs felt supported and appropriately challenged throughout the Droichead process, finding it conducive to their professional growth during the second stage of the Continuum of Teacher Education.

Nearly all NQTs identified observing experienced teachers as the most beneficial aspect of the Droichead process. They highlighted the rewarding nature of the experience, the excellent feedback and support received, and the positive impact of observations on classroom practice. However, some areas require more consistency across schools, including the use of release time, the role and involvement of PSTs at the school level, and the duration and style of post-observation conversations. Additionally, the online booking process for cluster meetings could be reviewed.

Nevertheless, it appears to be evident to NQTs that the primary objective of the Droichead process is to support their professional learning during the induction phase. Feedback shows that the Droichead Induction Division, as a dedicated continuing professional development support service, provides quality induction for every teacher.