








# **FORM TUTOR'S Pocketbook**

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Cartoons:  
Phil Hailstone

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# Finding out about your form



When you take over a form there is one important point to keep checking:  
**Have I spoken to each member of my form over the past week?**  
This is essential if you are to begin to develop relationships with your tutees.

- Drill yourself to meet your tutor group as they arrive; say *'Hello'*
- Move around your form room and chat
- Say *'Hi!'* to members of your form when you see them around school
- Talk to the students to find out 'what makes them tick'
- Find out what their hobbies are, and get them to bring in things linked to their interests to show you and the rest of the group

If you take an interest in what they do and who they are, they begin to see you as *theirs*.

## Taking over a form



Taking over someone else's form can be quite a challenge – you may be following in the footsteps of a favourite teacher, or may be expected to 'sort out' a form where tutoring was not a strength of your predecessor.

It is useful to adopt a frank 'bygones are bygones' approach. Tell the form that this is an entirely fresh start, and nothing from the past – good or bad – will influence your relationship with them. This gives everyone the chance to move forward together.

Invite the students in your form to tell you something about themselves when you first meet. The simplest way is to go down the register, as this also helps put faces to names. Use the birthday/likes checklist below as a quick way of making inroads.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Birthday</b>	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Dislikes</b>
Jo Green	15/May	Cats, music	Snow

When a colleague gave each of his new tutor group a birthday card and issued personalised Christmas cards en masse, the effect on morale was enormous.

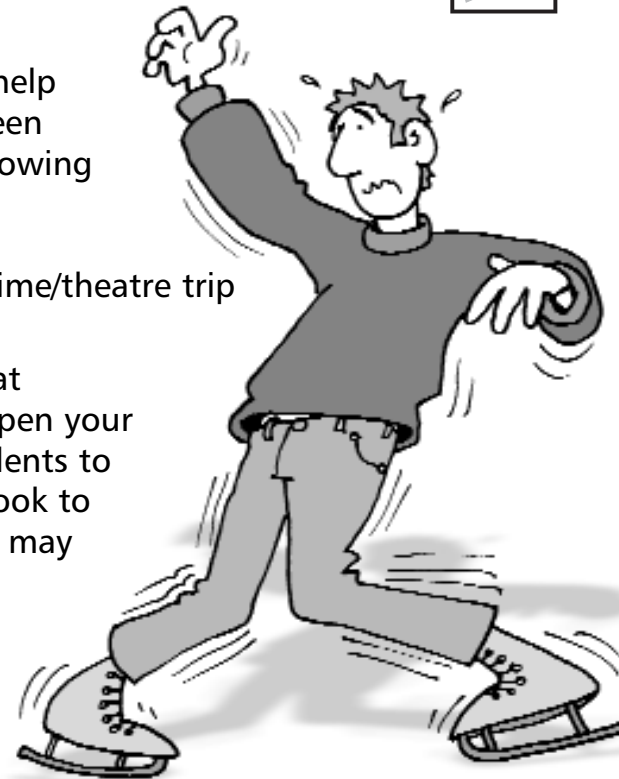
# Trips

Look to set up a whole-form social event that will help foster group identity. The following venues have been used to good effect by experienced colleagues, following a class vote as to which location would be best!

- Ice skating
- Ten-pin bowling
- Pantomime/theatre trip

As you get to know your students, you will find that extra-curricular interaction and knowledge will deepen your relationship with the class. You could then get students to research and plan a trip for the form or, perhaps, look to see if there are any residential trip opportunities. It may even be that your school would welcome such an 'enrichment' idea for the whole year group.

The *'Trips and Visits Pocketbook'* has helpful details on planning, organising and running events like these.



## Whole-school events



Whole-school events such as assembly and sports day can also foster form unity. It may well be that your form has to deliver an assembly to their peers. This is a good chance for you to support your students as they work together. Try to ensure that every student has something to do, even if it only involves standing at the back of the stage.

Sports days help build form spirit, but don't just concentrate on the athletes. Create a cheerleading-type support team with the non-athletes in the form. Use some tutor-time to get students making banners and thinking up suitable chants to encourage their classmates.

# Team-building checklist



As you develop your tutoring role keep this list in mind. You may look at some things on the list as monthly checkpoints, and others as termly.

- Have I checked that each form member is doing well in their lessons?
- Have I organised a form trip this term?
- Have I communicated with all parents – even just a quick note in a day book?
- Have I sat and chatted with each friendship group during tutor time?
- If I have disciplined a form member, have I built a friendly bridge back towards them?
- Do I regularly meet and greet the form at the door?
- Have I praised the whole form regularly?
- Do I know each form member's likes and dislikes?
- Which form members have siblings?
- Which form members have pets?
- Have I followed up 'X's request/problem?

## PSHE as a resource



You will get a great deal of support, not only from your line manager, but also from your school's PSHE programme. Although you may not be part of the team delivering this pastoral programme, your students will be learning useful strategies for how to deal with social issues, such as falling out with friends, bullying, managing arguments, and a host of other matters.

You should familiarise yourself with what pastoral programmes are being delivered to your tutees. This will let you pick up and develop topics during tutor time.

Look to adopt particular approaches from the PSHE programme. For example, often there is an emphasis on talking through problems; use this approach with your students in their contact with you.

Each school will have a slightly different ethos regarding PSHE work, so get a feel for how your school wants you to work.



# Role-play



You can get students to work through difficulties by using role-play. Assign emotions or points of view to *things* rather than people. For example, set up an 'angry' table and a 'calm' table. Sit the students at each table and get them to talk through a problem using the table's assigned point of view. Also, try role-play using other opposites – 'loud' and 'quiet' solutions, for instance.

Character cards also work well, as students are guided to play out the problem from the perspective of someone else. This simple character card is useful, because it incorporates an element of change:

## Joe

You are frustrated rather than angry.

You believe you are right and state your point of view.

You are able to listen to others.

You have admitted being wrong in previous arguments.

## About the author



### Roy Watson-Davis



Roy Watson-Davis has 13 years' teaching experience, the last four as a history AST. He has supported initial teacher training and NQT-mentoring for a number of years, and is involved in the development of post-16 teaching and learning across all subjects. He has also helped a school successfully move out of 'special measures'. He recently appeared as a panel member for a number of 'Resource Review' programmes for Teachers' Television. Roy has developed his form tutoring experience over the last thirteen years as a form tutor to all years from 7-12.

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