



# When Teaching Doesn't Feel Like the Textbook Said It Would

*A short guide for anyone questioning themselves right now – you're not imagining it, and you're not alone.*

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Somewhere between enrolling on the course, full of hope for the difference you were going to make, and actually standing in front of a class, something shifts. The textbook painted one picture. The reality is often something else entirely: messier, harder to name, and nobody quite prepared you for the gap between the two.

If you've started questioning your choices, your ability, even your own judgement, that's not a sign you've made a mistake. It's usually just a sign you're too close to your own situation to see it clearly anymore.

## **1. You know the theory, but the room doesn't behave like the textbook**

Real classrooms don't follow the clean scenarios courses describe. Struggling with that gap isn't a sign you're not cut out for this; it's what the gap actually feels like for almost everyone, even though nobody says so out loud.

## **2. You're carrying more than you're letting on**

Workload has a way of quietly becoming the whole picture, until it's hard to remember what drew you to this in the first place. Most people carrying this much don't say so, which makes it easy to assume everyone else is managing fine and you're the only one who isn't.

## **3. Managing the room takes everything you've got**

Behaviour, focus, energy in the space: when it takes real effort just to hold onto all three, there's often very little left over for anything else. That's not a sign of weak classroom management; it's what genuinely attentive teaching costs, especially before it becomes more automatic with time.

#### **4. You don't quite feel like “yourself” in front of the class yet**

Presence isn't something a course can teach in advance. It's normal for it to take time to arrive. Here's what's worth knowing while it does: presence starts with confidence, not the other way round, and that's exactly what makes it so magnetic once it's there. A few small, practical steps: how you stand, how you pause before responding, letting a silence sit rather than rushing to fill it, can help that confidence show through well before it feels fully natural from the inside.

#### **5. You're not sure your voice counts yet in the staff room**

Finding your footing among colleagues, not just pupils, is its own quiet challenge. It's one that rarely gets talked about directly, and it usually just takes longer than people expect, not a sign your ideas or opinions matter any less in the meantime.

#### **6. Managing adults is a different skill to managing pupils**

Behaviour management gets talked about constantly, but almost nobody prepares you for managing adults: teaching assistants, and sometimes colleagues older or more experienced than you. Being in charge of a room full of children and being in charge of a working relationship with an adult ask for genuinely different kinds of confidence. If authority, leadership, and partnership in that second context feel harder than the first, that's not a sign you're doing something wrong; it's simply a different skill, and one that takes its own time to build.

#### **7. Parents' evenings ask for a different kind of confidence again**

Speaking to parents from a huge range of backgrounds, keeping a queue moving without feeling rushed or rude, staying tactful and professional with someone who's upset or being unreasonable, all while staying clearly in charge of how long a conversation runs: that's its own particular skill, and a real source of anxiety for many teachers, especially early on. Assertiveness and warmth aren't opposites. The confidence to hold both at once tends to come with time and support, not instinct.

#### **What actually helps**

Often, what's needed isn't a solution; it's someone outside the situation, with a clear head, who can connect the dots you can't see anymore because you're standing too close. Sometimes that's a concrete next step. Sometimes it's simply being told it's genuinely okay to take a break. Either way, having someone say it plainly tends to matter more than people expect.

#### **Does any of this sound familiar?**

That's exactly what mentoring at Erurete is for: a steady, safe space for whatever you're actually carrying, from someone who's been in the classroom too.

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