



Department
for Education

Schools' Experiences of Hosting Trainees and Employing Newly Qualified Teachers

Research brief

June 2019

CooperGibson Research

Background

To support several strands of its ongoing work to improve teacher recruitment and retention, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned CooperGibson Research (CGR) to conduct a qualitative study exploring the experiences of schools in the process of training and supporting trainee teachers and Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs).

The aim of this project was to understand the experiences, challenges and benefits of hosting trainee teachers or employing NQTs from the perspectives of schools, providers, trainees and NQTs.

The training pathways considered during this research were:¹

- Higher Education Institution (HEI) undergraduate degree.
- HEI postgraduate degree.
- School Direct salaried and unsalaried.
- School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT).
- Teach First.

Research Method

A brief literature review was undertaken to inform the design of fieldwork materials. Following this, 281 qualitative telephone interviews and face-to-face case study visits were undertaken with: 158 school staff (72 senior leaders, 73 mentors/induction tutors, 13 middle leaders/teachers), 40 trainees and 47 NQTs, 18 representatives from 15 accredited ITT providers, 10 school governors and 8 wider stakeholders, including appropriate bodies and Teaching School Alliances.

Key Findings

Identifying placement schools and training routes

The capacity to provide support and high-quality mentoring to trainees and NQTs was a significant consideration for providers and school staff.² Trainees and NQTs themselves

¹ For a description of each training route, see Appendix 1 of the main report.

² Where 'school staff' is used throughout, this refers to the range of individuals working in placement schools that were involved in the research, such as senior leaders, mentors and middle leaders (for example, those involved in the case study discussions), but excludes NQTs.

were keen to understand the types of support that they would receive, particularly in relation to managing workload, gathering evidence and assessment.

Training providers³ and school senior leaders⁴ both emphasised the importance of being able to develop open, collaborative relationships with one another. The location of placement schools was important to training providers and trainees/NQTs in terms of managing the logistics of travel time and familiarity with a local area or school context.

In terms of senior leaders' choice of training routes:

- **HEI-led routes:**⁵ School staff generally enjoyed collaborating with universities, engaging with current research and being exposed to up-to-date pedagogy.
- **School-based routes:**⁶ These routes were perceived to immerse trainees in school environments, and therefore enable rapid progress and an opportunity for schools to 'grow your own' recruits.

Appropriate bodies

Relationships with appropriate bodies were largely historic. Many senior leaders were unaware of the range of appropriate bodies available to them. The majority of NQTs, when asked the question, said that they did not have direct contact with the appropriate body despite the statutory requirement for all NQTs to be designated a named contact at the appropriate body.

The provision of mentoring and support

A variety of individuals provided mentoring and support to trainees and NQTs. School-based mentors were involved from a variety of roles: ITT mentors, ITT professional mentors, NQT induction tutors and NQT mentors. Tutors from ITT providers also delivered support. The main report provides a description of the roles and involvement of each type of mentor.

³ Where 'training provider' or 'provider' is used, this refers to accredited ITT providers including those supporting School Direct routes.

⁴ Where 'senior leaders' is used, this refers to senior leaders in ITT placement schools, or schools employing NQTs.

⁵ Where 'HEI-led routes' is used, this refers to undergraduate and postgraduate ITT courses, where training is predominantly delivered by universities.

⁶ Where 'school-based routes' is used, this refers to Teach First, School Direct and SCITT.

School-based mentors were consistently perceived by all interview participants (ITT providers, school leaders, mentors, trainees and NQTs) to be critical to the success of ITT placements and the positive development of NQTs.

Informal support strategies that were perceived to work well by all types of interview participant were:

- Buddy systems and peer networks.
- Encouraging whole school responsibility for the development of trainees and NQTs.
- Newsletters and bulletins sent by training providers to keep track of deadlines, tasks and evidence requirements.

Challenges in providing support to trainees and NQTs related to the perceived lack of protected time that mentors were given for the role, and the additional workload created for mentors.

Evidencing requirements and quality assurance

Evidencing requirements were flagged by all types of interview participant as a challenging aspect of ITT and (to a lesser extent) NQT experiences. The following challenges were reported:

- Inconsistencies in the variety, range and amount of evidence required, and in expectations between providers (including within the same ITT route).
- Gaps in understanding as to what constituted evidence among trainees, NQTs, and their mentors/assessors.
- Time-consuming evidencing processes, particularly where providers required evidence to be collated and submitted via paper-based systems. It was reported by trainees and their mentors that these systems often led to duplication of effort.

Attempts had been made by some schools and ITT providers to reduce evidencing requirements. Electronic systems and software to support evidencing were generally perceived to save time, reduce workload and encourage consistent review of progress by mentors, ITT tutors or NQT coordinators.

Benefits and challenges

The perceived benefits of hosting trainees and employing NQTs, reported by all participant types, were:

- The injection of fresh ideas into the workforce, through energetic and enthusiastic people coming into the school who are able to share up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and ideas.
- Promoting reflective practice among mentors and early career teachers.

- Staff development for the existing workforce, e.g. leadership and development skills for mentors.

Perceived challenges included:

- Finding appropriate and sufficient time to provide support, especially for school-based mentors.
- Balancing evidencing requirements with management of a sustainable workload.
- Managing expectations among trainees and NQTs.
- Mentors not feeling able to manage difficult conversations effectively.

Points for consideration

Please refer to the main report for further detail relating to the following conclusions:

- **Value of hosting trainees/employing NQTs:** The benefits for schools of hosting trainees and employing NQTs should be more widely promoted to encourage more schools to engage in initial teacher training (ITT) and development.
- **The importance of school-based mentors:** Raising the profile of standards for school-based mentors⁷ and/or accreditation or national recognition of the status would provide acknowledgement of their commitment, knowledge and skills.
- **Managing mentor workload:** Consideration needs to be given to how schools can support mentors more appropriately for the time they are required to give to the role. Promotion of peer networks and buddy systems for mentors as well as trainees and NQTs, would help to encourage more schools to introduce such support systems.
- **Ensuring capacity:** Consideration should be given to how timetabling and staff commitments can be managed to allow trainees to experience the teaching of different age groups and types of pupils.
- **Variations in evidencing:** There needs to be clarity and information on the evidence expected from ITT providers and appropriate bodies. Streamlined processes for gathering evidence, and standardisation across providers, are also required.
- **Workload implications of evidence collection:** ITT providers should make efforts to ensure manageable and sustainable workloads in relation to evidencing and to actively find ways to reduce the burdens on trainees, NQTs and their mentors. All those involved in initial teacher education and working with NQTs

⁷ The Teaching Schools Council (July, 2016) National Standards for school-based initial teacher training (ITT) mentor: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-government-response-to-carter-review>

should aim to reduce the overall workload on those teachers by making expectations realistic and sustainable.

- **Effective partnership working:** This should be encouraged between ITT providers and schools to ensure practical experience and theoretical understanding are up-to-date and aligned.
- **Awareness of different ways to train:** Raising awareness of all teacher training options would open up opportunities to potential trainees and reduce the chance of applicants choosing an inappropriate pathway.
- **Awareness of appropriate bodies:** The role of appropriate bodies is currently unknown to many NQTs. A review of the appropriate body role more broadly in terms of their statutory duties, the support provided to schools and NQTs and quality assurance of induction would help to improve consistency in their provision.
- **Awareness of governors:** Consideration should be given to the role of governors and the strategic oversight they should have of their school's experience of hosting trainees and employing NQTs.



Department
for Education

© Cooper-Gibson Ltd [2019]

Reference: DFE- (RB920)

ISBN: 978-1-83870-041-6

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:
sue.porter@education.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus

This document is available for download at www.gov.uk/government/publications