



Department  
for Education

# Evaluation of the Tailored Support Programme

Final research report

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## Executive summary

Between June 2018 and November 2020, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted an evaluation of the Tailored Support Programme on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). The summary below presents the key findings of the evaluation.

### About the Tailored Support Programme

The Tailored Support Programme (TSP) provided a range of support to schools experiencing challenges with teacher recruitment and retention. This included system leader support for senior leaders, as well as mentoring and other support for early-career teachers (ECTs), which incorporated continuing professional development (CPD) and additional time off timetable.

Schools were identified as eligible for the TSP using the DfE's Supply Index. Based on previous DfE research, schools with a high Supply Index value were deemed to be more likely to be experiencing significant issues with recruitment and/or retention. Schools were then further prioritised based on whether they were in Priority Areas<sup>1</sup> or had high rates of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium.

The TSP included three waves of support: schools in the first two waves of support were approached between January and September 2018 and the third wave schools were approached between October 2018 and February 2019. A total of 323 schools engaged with the TSP across the three waves.

### About the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to explore perceptions of the TSP and, in particular, gather data on: reasons for engagement; what was delivered; what worked well and less well and why; perceived impacts; sustainability; challenges in engaging with the programme; and what has been learnt for future recruitment and retention programmes.

The evaluation included baseline surveys with senior leaders and teachers, as well as telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders at baseline and end-point. Some stakeholders were interviewed at both time-points, although this was not the case for all. Across the two time-points, telephone interviews were undertaken with a total of 55

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<sup>1</sup> Schools in local authority district areas categorised as 5 or 6, according to the Achieving Excellence Areas methodology (DfE, 2016).

senior leaders (50 at baseline and 32 at end-point), 51 ECTs (51 at baseline and 15 at end-point), 27 mentors (25 at baseline and 11 at end-point), and eight system leaders (all at end-point). In addition, eight school case studies were conducted, with two of these being returned to at end-point.

It is worth noting that end-point evaluation activities scheduled for April-July 2020 were impacted by Covid-19 and a lower number of interviews and case studies were completed than intended.

## **Key evaluation findings**

### **System leader support**

Most senior leaders interviewed were positive about the support provided by their system leader, which, in most cases, included action planning followed by ongoing coaching and mentoring. The focus of coaching and mentoring most commonly included leadership development, recruitment strategies, sourcing or providing CPD, workload reduction, and staffing structures and workforce planning. In some cases, support was provided to the broader senior leadership team, middle leaders and teachers.

Senior leaders particularly valued access to the system leaders' knowledge, expertise, their school and networks, their help with action planning, and their ongoing strategic support. System leaders were also valued for their non-judgemental support.

The two main challenges mentioned in relation to the delivery of system leader support were time constraints for both the system leaders and senior leaders, and a lack of engagement from some schools. Some schools were said to need encouragement to go beyond the 'bare bones' of the programme.

### **Mentoring for ECTs**

The support provided to ECTs was more often characterised as coaching (facilitating and empowering them to resolve challenges themselves with support from a coach) rather than mentoring (perceived as more instructional and directive).

In making a choice between internal or external mentoring, the internal capacity of senior staff who would act as mentors was a key factor, alongside whether senior leaders wanted to capitalise on the TSP support to develop and extend this capacity internally. Some senior leaders lacked confidence in the quality and skillset of potential external mentors, as well as their knowledge of the TSP school and the time they would have available. This was often due to a lack of information.

Internal mentors were said to be experienced, high-calibre middle and senior leaders who had prior experience of mentoring. Some attended internal refresher training, whilst others received more extensive external training. The majority felt confident in their mentoring role and were typically matched with two or three ECTs.

Internal mentoring was generally undertaken more frequently than external mentoring, with weekly as opposed to half-termly sessions being most common. The majority of ECTs used some of/all of their additional non-contact time to ensure that their time for mentoring was 'ring-fenced'.

Mentoring most often included one-to-one sessions, both formal and informal, and lesson observations. It also included in-class support, shadowing, mentors brokering CPD and identifying resources, and joint planning and marking. Mentoring was reported to be tailored to the needs and personality of the ECT and often focused on developing teaching practice and/or middle or subject leadership.

Key factors informing the matching decision included the workload and availability of mentors, the specialism/key stage of mentors and ECTs, skillsets, the development needs of ECTs, existing relationships, phase (primary/secondary) and, for external mentoring, location.

Mentoring was felt to have been particularly successful when it was designed to meet the ECT's specific needs and was formally timetabled, and when dedicated non-contact time was allocated to both the ECT and mentor. In general, matching on skillset and subject specialism/key stage was felt to be beneficial (although this was not *always* seen as crucial and was dependent on the needs of the mentee). An empowering coaching approach was generally favoured over more directive mentoring, which worked particularly well where mentees were able to be honest about their challenges without fear of being judged. Several ECTs reported that the mentoring was the most effective element of the TSP.

The particular benefits of external mentoring were considered to be the mentor's independence, which enabled frank and open discussions, and their external perspective. External mentors were able to provide opportunities for ECTs to observe good teaching and leadership practice in other settings.

The benefits of internal mentoring were perceived to be that the mentors had an understanding of the school environment, systems and processes, meetings were easier to arrange on-site, and ad-hoc support could be accommodated.

In terms of what was reported to have worked less well with mentoring, lack of time was the most frequently reported challenge, particularly when regular timeslots had not been allocated. In addition, in most cases, ECTs did not have a say in who would be mentoring

them and some would have liked more involvement in this decision. And, where the mentor taught a different subject or key stage, the mentoring was generally considered to be less effective, although this was not always the case.

Where internal mentoring was reported to be less effective, it was often due to the ECT not feeling comfortable discussing frustrations related to the internal school culture and environment, for example leadership. Some ECTs who had a mentor who was their line manager or who worked in the same department did not find this helpful. In addition, some senior leaders mentioned the additional workload for mentors.

A number of challenges were reported in relation to external mentoring such as: poor communication between mentors and mentees; for some, the distance between the ECT's and the mentor's schools; poor matching, including ECTs thinking their mentor did not have the necessary skills; the impact on pupils of ECTs being out of class for long periods of time and being replaced by supply teachers; mentors being too busy; and the time taken to set up the mentoring. Although concerns around ECTs being out of the classroom and finding suitable supply cover were reported in relation to both types of mentoring (noted in school-level challenges below), these could be more significant for external mentoring due to a larger number of external visits.

In reality, there were advantages and disadvantages to both internal and external mentoring and what approach worked best depended on a range of factors, including internal school capacity, the needs of the mentee and the culture of the school.

## **Early-career support (CPD and additional non-contact time) for ECTs**

### **Additional non-contact time**

Most ECTs interviewed had been given additional non-contact time, but the amount of time and how it was scheduled varied. In some cases, it was timetabled weekly or half termly and the time ranged between an hour and an afternoon. In other cases, a set number of days were allocated to be used as and when needed. The time was used for: mentoring and coaching conversations; in-class support; visiting other classrooms and settings; shadowing subject leaders; and ECTs accessing, reflecting on, and embedding learning from CPD. In addition, ECTs used the time to carry out the requirements of their role including: lesson planning and developing resources; marking and assessment; curriculum development; and fulfilling/developing subject leadership roles.

In terms of what was perceived to have worked well with the additional non-contact time, senior leaders and ECTs reported that it provided valuable time for mentoring, undertaking CPD and embedding learning, and provided time for reflection, enhancing subject knowledge, and career development. Some ECTs also reported that the time had helped with their work-life balance. The flexible nature of the time in terms of when it was



used and what it was used for was praised. Some ECTs felt that this additional time was the most valuable aspect of the programme.

## **CPD**

Most ECTs interviewed had received CPD through the TSP, which was mainly delivered externally and included opportunities to visit other schools to observe and share good practice. The focus varied and was tailored to ECTs' needs and included areas such as: subject knowledge development; classroom practice and pedagogy; subject leadership; general leadership; outstanding teaching; giving feedback to students; training to become a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO); training on dyslexia; safeguarding; behaviour management; raising student aspirations; workload; syllabus content; exam preparation; assessment for learning; and undertaking Masters modules and degrees.

Although all internal mentors were said to have had prior mentoring experience and training, one third of the senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that additional CPD had been provided to mentors via the TSP, some of which was delivered by system leaders, and sometimes more extensive external training was offered. This included leadership programmes, such as the Specialist Leader of Education, National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) and Lead Practitioner programmes.

Regarding what had worked well with the CPD, some senior leaders and ECTs commented on its bespoke nature, the opportunity for ECTs to visit other settings, and the focus on external CPD. Some ECTs felt that external CPD was more impactful than internal CPD. The funding for the CPD was seen to be a significant enabling factor. A number of ECTs viewed the CPD as the most valuable element of the TSP.

In terms of what was thought to have worked less well, some ECTs found their CPD too generic and others would have liked more emphasis on classroom observation. In addition, TSP funding was reported to be allocated retrospectively, which was too late for ECTs to be able to apply and pay for Masters modules and courses. Some senior leaders commented on the need to use supply teachers to cover lessons whilst ECTs were undertaking CPD, which ECTs reported could increase their workload.

## **Perceived impacts**

### **Impacts for schools**

Around two-thirds of the senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported a positive experience of teacher recruitment in the last year, with most noting an increase in the number and quality of applicants. This had been realised through a number of different strategies, including: further/improved links with initial teacher training (ITT) providers;

increased use of the 'grow your own' approach, including of pre-SCITT (school-centred initial teacher training) programmes for support staff; more use of Teach First; and recruiting from abroad. Some senior leaders had revised their recruitment materials, advertised more widely, and used social media. Other strategies included introducing new posts and offering pay incentives, such as Teaching and Learning Responsibly Payments (TLRs) or salary uplifts attached to advertised posts.

At end-point, *almost all* senior leaders interviewed reported a more positive picture of teacher retention. This was said to have resulted from more focus on: senior leader and staff relationships; teacher wellbeing and workload reduction; CPD; and offering promotion and additional responsibilities to teachers who had developed their skills and expertise during the programme.

Other perceived school impacts included the development of new partnerships, particularly with system leaders' and external mentors' schools. There were also reports of school culture change, for example embedding a mentoring and coaching culture across the school. Some senior leaders referred to increased senior and middle management capacity and expertise, for example as a result of system leader and external mentoring support. A number of senior leaders also mentioned an improved CPD offer and wider school improvement, for example as a result of staff cascading learning. In addition, some senior leaders commented that their involvement in the TSP had increased the speed with which school improvement had been realised.

### **Impacts for ECTs**

The programme was perceived by senior leaders and ECTs to have resulted in a range of impacts for ECTs, including improvements in their: subject/key stage knowledge and practice; leadership knowledge, skills and practice; wellbeing, motivation and morale; confidence; career development; and retention.

### **Impacts for mentors**

There were perceived positive impacts on mentors' retention, leadership capabilities, mentoring and coaching skills, subject knowledge and practice and career development. Mentors also reported gaining personal satisfaction from their role in the programme.

## **Sustainability of programme activities and impacts**

In terms of programme activities:

- around a third of senior leaders reported that they intended to retain the coaching and mentoring systems that had been introduced in their schools, which ranged from support for all staff to targeted individuals

- around a third of senior leaders intended to retain specific coaching and mentoring for ECTs
- a fifth of senior leaders reported that they would retain the ECT CPD offer and additional non-contact time, however some reported funding implications which would reduce the entitlement
- a fifth of senior leaders expected to retain their relationship with their system leader.

Where senior leaders reported that they were not able to sustain the range of support for ECTs, the main reason cited was a lack of funding.

In terms of programme impacts:

- a quarter of senior leaders specifically reported that they would continue to benefit from the increased skills, experience and confidence of staff involved in the programme and that these staff could now share their learning with others in school to further increase impact
- other sustained impacts related to curriculum and policy changes and improved/ additional recruitment and retention strategies.

## **Challenges faced by schools in engaging with the programme**

A number of programme-level and school-level challenges were reported by a notable proportion of interviewees in relation to schools engaging with the TSP.

Programme-level challenges often related to funding. This included there being insufficient funding to have an impact where there were very small numbers of ECTs. In addition, having to claim money back retrospectively was felt to be over-complicated, and paying for the programme up front could not always be accommodated in school budgets.

Some senior leaders also reported that the timescales for applying for, and being allocated, funding did not align well with the academic year, which limited their ability to effectively plan ahead and employ appropriate staff to cover the release time of teachers involved in the programme. In addition, some ECTs were not able to enrol on CPD courses, such as Masters, when funding was received after enrolment dates.

A small number of system leaders commented that the data on which some schools were selected was out-of-date and that they had already started to address recruitment and retention challenges and did not need programme support. Some senior leaders noted poor communication about the programme, which led to them being unclear about the strand structure and support available. Bureaucracy associated with the implementation of the programme was also raised as an issue by a small number of system leaders, who commented on extensive form filling. In addition, some senior leaders commented that the timing of the programme was an issue, which was introduced in some schools when timetables and staffing were fixed for the academic year. A lack of evidence-informed activities for system leaders to draw on was also raised by a minority of system leaders.

School-level challenges reported included ECTs and internal mentors being out of the classroom and concerns around suitable supply cover, which was thought to impact negatively on pupils. The increased workload of some ECTs, senior leaders and mentors was also reported. In addition, it was reported that some ECTs were leaving their TSP school for promotion elsewhere, although they were retained within the profession.

## **Learning for future recruitment and retention programmes**

### **What recruitment and retention challenges was the programme unable to tackle?**

Although a range of benefits were realised by the TSP, senior leaders noted some deep-rooted challenges - most of which they suggested needed tackling at a national level - which the programme was not able to resolve. Senior leaders reported these continued challenges to include: issues with national teacher supply and quality - particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and modern foreign languages (MFL); negative perceptions/profile of teaching as a career; teacher salaries not being competitive and in line with other professions; and the pressures of the job, including workload and accountability (Ofsted). Some specific school-related recruitment and retention challenges were also said to persist, particularly relating to: location (geographical and socio-economic), Ofsted rating and leadership culture and ethos.

### **What elements of the TSP could be used across schools to address recruitment and retention challenges?**

Senior leaders noted a range of effective elements of the TSP, characterised as a 'catalyst for change', which they felt could be used in the future to support schools facing recruitment and retention challenges. These included:

- support from an experienced system leader
- a tailored and flexible support package built around the specific needs of the school
- opportunities for schools to network to share effective practice and solutions to common challenges

- the provision of additional non-contact time, mentoring/coaching and CPD for ECTs (which will now be offered to teachers in the second year of teaching as part of the [Early Career Framework](#))
- the mentoring and coaching model for staff development within schools.

# 1. Introduction and background

This section provides an introduction to the report and to the Tailored Support Programme (TSP).

## 1.1 Introduction to the report

This report presents the consolidated findings of the evaluation of the TSP. The evaluation was conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) between June 2018 and November 2020. The TSP provided a range of support for schools in England experiencing challenges with teacher recruitment and retention. This included system leader support for senior leaders, as well as mentoring and other support for early-career teachers (ECTs), which incorporated continuing professional development (CPD) and additional time off timetable. Further details are provided in section 1.3.

The aim of the evaluation was to explore perceptions of the TSP and, in particular, gather data on: reasons for engagement; what was delivered; what worked well and less well and why; perceived impacts; sustainability; challenges in engaging with the programme; and what has been learnt for future recruitment and retention programmes.

The report primarily focuses on the findings from interviews and case studies with system leaders, senior leaders, ECTs and mentors. It also presents key findings from baseline surveys of senior leaders and teachers. Further details are provided in section 2.

## 1.2 Policy context

A major priority for the educational policy agenda is to recruit and retain enough teachers to meet the current and future requirements of the education system. Analysis in 2017 by the DfE found that there was significant variation at a local level in the extent to which schools were able to address teacher recruitment and retention challenges (DfE, 2017). In particular, these variations often existed at a school level and the factors associated with the challenges were complex and varied.

In January 2018, the DfE launched the TSP, a programme of up to £30 million to help schools identified as likely to be facing recruitment and retention challenges. The TSP aimed to support these schools to recruit and retain talented teachers through a tailored package of support. The package included newly-funded initiatives, as well as ensuring schools had access to national teacher supply programmes and were supported to strengthen local partnerships with, and between, schools.

Evidence has shown that teachers early in their career are more likely to leave the profession, emphasising the importance of supporting and retaining teachers in the early years after they enter teaching. However, the challenge of retaining early-career teachers has been increasing in recent years. Over 20 per cent of new teachers leave the profession within their first two years of teaching, and 32 per cent leave within their first five years (DfE, 2019b). Two of the newly-funded TSP initiatives were directly targeted at supporting schools to better retain early-career teachers, providing mentoring support and early-career support (CPD and additional non-contact time) to ECTs.

Following the TSP launch, the DfE published its Recruitment and Retention Strategy in January 2019 (DfE, 2019a). The strategy identified four key priorities: establishing supportive school cultures and reducing workload; introducing more support for early-career teachers; supporting a career offer that remains attractive to teachers as their careers and lives develop; and making the process of becoming a teacher less complicated and burdensome.

Key to the second key priority of the DfE's Recruitment and Retention Strategy is the [Early Career Framework](#) (ECF) and learning from the TSP will be very valuable in informing this new support package. The ECF underpins an entitlement to a fully-funded, two-year package of structured support for all early-career teachers linked to the best available research evidence. It extends the length of the induction phase to two years and includes funded time off timetable and support from a trained mentor in the second year of teaching. The ECF is being rolled out from September 2020 in the North East, Greater Manchester, Bradford and Doncaster. The early rollout will inform a national rollout from September 2021.

## **1.3 The Tailored Support Programme (TSP)**

### **1.3.1 What support was included in the TSP?**

The TSP was developed to support schools facing significant teacher supply difficulties and to address the school-level challenges behind them. It offered tailored support packages to schools that the DfE identified as likely to be facing the most severe recruitment and retention challenges.

Eligible schools were approached by the DfE's Regional Delivery Division (RDD) to discuss the school's teacher supply situation and offer a range of support through the TSP. The DfE approached 242 schools with an offer of support in the first two waves during January – September 2018. A third wave of 228 schools was approached with an offer of support during October 2018 – February 2019.

Contacted schools that expressed interest in the programme were visited by a member of the RDD and a system leader<sup>2</sup> to discuss the extent and nature of the teacher supply challenges they were facing, and to outline the DfE's offer of support through the TSP in more detail. Schools that chose to engage with the offer of support subsequently developed action plans with their system leader, and engaged with a range of activities funded through a grant. The activities included:

- continued system leader support for senior leaders
- mentoring support for early-career teachers (ECTs)<sup>3</sup>
- early-career support for ECTs (including access to CPD and the provision of additional non-contact time)
- engaging with existing national teacher supply programmes
- developing partnerships with other local schools and organisations.

More detail about the strands of support schools engaged with is provided in sections 5-7. The first three strands of support – system leader support, and mentoring and early-career support for ECTs (CPD and non-contact time) – are the primary focus of this evaluation report as these were the strands of support funded directly through TSP.

### **1.3.2 How were schools selected for involvement in the TSP?**

Schools were identified as eligible for TSP using the DfE's Supply Index, a methodology that attributes a score to each school derived from School Workforce Census data, depending on the severity of its teacher supply issues (DfE, 2017). Research by the DfE verified that schools with a high Supply Index value were more likely to report significant issues with recruitment/retention than schools with a low value (DfE, 2018). The Supply Index was used to identify schools with the most significant teacher supply issues, which could be approached with the offer of support. Schools identified through the Supply Index were further prioritised based on whether they were in Priority Areas<sup>4</sup> or had high rates of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium.

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<sup>2</sup> System leaders were at least a specialist leader of education (SLE), with experience and expertise in recruitment and retention of teachers and based in the same region as the school. Most system leaders were national leaders of education (NLEs) or equivalent, some of whom may have deployed a local leader of education (LLE) or SLE or equivalent from their teaching school alliance (TSA) to work with the TSP schools, under their supervision.

<sup>3</sup> ECTs who were eligible to receive support via the programme were in their second to fourth year of teaching.

<sup>4</sup> Schools in local authority district areas categorised as 5 or 6, according to the Achieving Excellence Areas methodology (DfE, 2016).



Slight changes were made to the selection process before the selection of wave 3 schools. The Supply Index was refreshed to use the latest available School Workforce Census data. Greater use was also made of local intelligence on schools facing teacher supply issues (for example from local authorities, regional school commissioners) to inform school selection alongside the Supply Index, as some schools that had greater need had not been identified through the Supply Index. DfE undertook some analysis of how accurate the Supply Index was in identifying schools with recruitment and retention issues. The findings showed that, while it broadly helped to identify more schools with issues, it was not perfect<sup>5</sup>.

Another change for eligible wave 3 school(s) was that, for those which were part of a multi-academy trust (MAT), the MAT was allowed to submit a single grant application for eligible ECTs and internal mentors across their whole MAT. The system leader support was, however, linked to the number of eligible schools. This approach was developed with some wave 1 and 2 schools, and applied to all relevant wave 3 schools.

All schools identified as eligible were approached with an offer of support, but not all schools took up the offer of support. Of the 470 eligible schools which were approached, 323 participated in the programme (a 69 per cent participation rate).

### **1.3.3 What types of schools participated in the TSP?**

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the 323 schools that engaged with the TSP in waves 1, 2 and 3. Around half were secondary schools, which is higher than the national proportion of 20 per cent. A higher proportion of TSP primary and secondary schools were academies than schools of the same phase nationally: around two in five TSP primary schools and four in five TSP secondary schools were academies. Around one in five schools (22 per cent) were located in a rural area, which was broadly similar to schools nationally. Compared to the national distribution of schools, TSP schools were disproportionately drawn from the Midlands and fewer were located in the South. TSP schools were also more likely to be Ofsted-category Requires Improvement or Inadequate than schools nationally. Just under half (48 per cent) of TSP schools were in these categories compared to 13 per cent nationally.

TSP schools also had higher proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to nationally: 76 per cent of schools were in the two most-deprived quintiles, compared to 40 per cent among all schools. Just over half of TSP schools were based in

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<sup>5</sup>[Link to Analysis of teacher supply, retention and mobility report](#)

Priority Areas: areas categorised as having the lowest educational performance and capacity to improve, according to the [Achieving Excellence Areas methodology](#). Both of these factors were prioritised in the selection process for TSP and were reflected in the characteristics of the schools which agreed to take part.

The majority of the senior leaders interviewed highlighted the challenging context that their school was working in. They discussed the deprived communities in which their schools were located and reported high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and the Pupil Premium, and with English as an Additional Language (one reported as many as 38 spoken languages). A number of senior leaders reported considerable turnover of pupils resulting, for example, from a large number of traveller families in their catchment area. Many senior leaders also noted that their school was currently working to improve standards, outcomes, and their current Ofsted rating.

**Table 1: Characteristics of all schools that engaged with the TSP**

	<b>TSP schools (percentage)</b>	<b>National (percentage)</b>
<b>Phase</b>		
Primary	52	80
Secondary	48	20
<b>School type (primary)</b>		
Academy (primary)	41	23
LA maintained (primary)	59	77
<b>School type (secondary)</b>		
Academy (secondary)	82	58
LA maintained (secondary)	18	42
<b>Urban/rural</b>		
Urban	78	72
Rural	22	28
<b>Region</b>		
London	8	10
South	22	28
Midlands	39	32
North	31	30
<b>Ofsted category</b>		
Outstanding	4	21

	<b>TSP schools (percentage)</b>	<b>National (percentage)</b>
Good	48	65
Requires Improvement	35	10
Inadequate	13	3
<b>Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) (quintiles)</b>		
Lowest quintile	3	20
2nd lowest quintile	6	20
Middle quintile	16	20
2nd highest quintile	34	20
Highest quintile	42	20
<b>Achieving Excellence Areas (AEA) categories</b>		
6 (Lowest performance/capacity to improve)	30	16
5	23	17
4	18	19
3	11	17
2	6	15
1 (Highest performance/capacity to improve)	12	15

Note: Since percentages are rounded to the nearest integer, they may not always sum to 100.

Source: DfE management information, Get Information About Schools, 2018.

## 2. About the evaluation

This section presents details of the evaluation methodology and the characteristics of the participants involved.

### 2.1 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of the TSP took place between June 2018 and November 2020 and consisted of a quantitative baseline survey of senior leaders and ECTs and qualitative telephone interviews and case studies with a range of stakeholders involved in the TSP. Further details are provided below.

#### 2.1.1 Quantitative survey

Between June and November 2018, an online baseline survey was carried out with wave 1 and 2 senior leaders who had recently signed up to the programme. The same survey was subsequently conducted with wave 3 senior leaders between January and May 2019. The surveys were administered after senior leaders and their designated system leaders had jointly drafted the school's action plan (which needed to be approved by DfE), but before most funded activity had commenced. The survey explored the recruitment and retention context of the school and asked senior leaders about their school's engagement with the programme, including which strands of support they had chosen to participate in and why. Responses were received from 225 senior leaders, representing a 78 per cent response rate.

In addition to the senior leader survey, between January and March 2019, an online baseline survey was carried out with wave 1 and 2 ECTs. The same survey was then conducted with ECTs in wave 3 schools between April and June 2019. The survey explored ECTs' views on teaching and their school, their reason for becoming involved in the TSP, the support they were receiving (or would receive) as part of the programme, and their expectations of impact. Responses were received from 696 ECTs, representing a 66 per cent response rate.

Senior leader and ECT survey respondents were representative of the TSP population by school type, school phase and region. Details of the characteristics of senior leaders and ECTs taking part in the baseline surveys can be found in the technical appendix.

The original intention was to carry out follow-up surveys with senior leaders and ECTs at the end of the programme. However, a decision was made part-way through the evaluation for it to take a more qualitative focus, as the findings from the initial in-depth telephone interviews and case studies (described below) were found to be more insightful and valuable. This report includes selected key findings from the initial surveys

to provide context, but focuses primarily on the findings from the in-depth qualitative data. The data from the baseline surveys drawn on in this report can be found in the technical appendix.

### 2.1.2 Qualitative telephone interviews

Telephone interviews with senior leaders, ECTs and mentors were carried out at the beginning and end of the programme. Some were longitudinal interviews, with individuals interviewed at both time-points. System leaders were also interviewed at the end of the programme.

Senior leaders and ECTs were sampled from those who responded in the online survey that they were willing to be interviewed. They were then selected to ensure the inclusion of different types of school criteria, including: primary and secondary schools; academies and maintained schools; urban and rural schools; and schools in different regions. Mentors were selected at random using data provided by the DfE, and represented maintained schools, academies, primary and secondary schools. Similarly, system leaders were selected at random from data provided by the DfE.

Table 2 presents a summary of the number of interviews carried out at each time-point with each group of interviewees.

**Table 2 Number of telephone interviewees**

Interviewee	Total	Number at baseline	Number at end-point	Number at both time-points	New at end-point	Number of schools represented
Senior leaders	55	50	32	27	5	51
ECTs	51	51	15	15	0	40
Mentors	27	25	11	9	2	25
System leaders	8	N/A	8	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note that the number of interviews at follow-up was smaller than at baseline, because the follow-up interviews commenced just before school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant data collection ceased before originally intended. The views reflected in the report are not necessarily representative of all individuals in these roles, but the interviews provided valuable insights into perceptions of the programme. The

most common responses and themes are reported. If more minority views are felt to be informative they are reported, but the small number of respondents are noted.

A detailed breakdown of the characteristics of the interviewees and their schools can be found in Appendix 1 (Tables 5-7), but they are also summarised below.

### **2.1.3 Telephone interviews with senior leaders**

A total of 55 senior leaders across 51 schools took part in an interview over the course of the evaluation. Of the 55, 27 were interviewed twice, at the start and end of the programme. They were evenly spread across primary (26) and secondary (29) schools. They were also spread geographically: 19 in the north of England; 18 in the midlands; and 18 in the south. Most (46) were in schools in an urban location. Most (38) senior leaders represented academies and free schools.

Across the 55 senior leaders interviewed during the evaluation, interviewees included: 31 headteachers; four executive headteachers; four principals; three assistant/deputy headteachers; two executive principals; two assistant principals; two school improvement officers/advisers; one head of school; one chief executive officer (CEO); one director of training and professional development; one HR manager; one MAT officer; one senior standards officer; and one ITT coordinator.

### **2.1.4 Telephone interviews with ECTs**

Over the course of the whole evaluation, interviews were carried out with 51 ECTs representing 40 schools. Fifteen ECTs were interviewed at both time-points. The 51 ECTs represented 32 secondary schools, 17 primary schools and two 'all through' schools. They were spread geographically: 15 in the north of England; 20 in the midlands; and 16 in the south. Most (39) taught in urban locations, although 12 ECTs represented rural locations. Most (34) taught in academies.

The majority of the ECTs were teaching full-time and had been teaching for between two and four years<sup>6</sup>. Over half of the ECTs had been in their current schools for two years or less and a majority of these ECTs had trained and/or completed their newly-qualified teacher (NQT) year in their current school. A small minority of ECTs had worked at their current school prior to obtaining qualified teacher status and so had been at their current school for six or more years.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that teachers who commenced the programme in their fourth year of teaching were eligible for support in their fifth year as the programme continued.

Within the primary sector, it emerged that most of these ECTs had taught, or were expecting to teach, across Key Stage 1 and 2. In the secondary sector, all of the ECTs interviewed taught across Key Stages 3 and 4, with a minority also teaching Key Stage 5. A range of subjects were represented. A minority of the ECTs held an additional responsibility, such as being a head of subject or faculty, or head of house.

### **2.1.5 Telephone interviews with mentors**

Over the entire evaluation, telephone interviews were carried out with 27 mentors representing 25 schools. Nine mentors were interviewed at both time points. Of the 27, all but one were in-school internal mentors (a perspective from external mentors was gained through the case studies, described below). Overall, 17 were based in secondary schools and ten in primary schools. They were geographically spread across the north (12), south (ten) and midlands (five). Most mentors (17) were from urban schools rather than schools in rural areas. In addition, most worked in academies (18) rather than in maintained schools (nine).

All of the mentors were experienced teachers, with at least five years of experience in the classroom. Most had been teaching for more than ten years. While some had teaching responsibilities, others were in non-teaching leadership positions such as assistant headteacher. Additional responsibilities and roles held by the mentors interviewed included phase lead, subject lead, SENCO, head of house, teaching and learning lead, and teacher development lead. A small minority of the mentors also had roles beyond their school, such as being an accredited specialist leader of education (SLE). There was quite a range in terms of how long they had been teaching at their current schools, from starting this academic year to over 15 years at the school.

All the mentors interviewed were experienced mentors, having previously mentored trainee teachers and/or NQTs as a minimum. The extent of the mentoring training they had received prior to the TSP varied. Most had received some training as part of their NQT mentoring role. Some had then also completed mentoring and coaching training with local providers, such as a teaching school alliance (TSA), while others had completed their training as part of broader national professional qualifications, such as the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) and the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL), or when training to become an Advanced Skills Teacher. One mentor had achieved mentoring-specific level one and two qualifications from the Institute of Education.

### **2.1.6 Interviews with system leaders**

In-depth interviews with eight system leaders were carried out towards the end of the programme. System leaders' 'usual' roles included: headteachers; executive

headteachers; national leaders of education (NLE); local leaders of education (LLE); a provider of training support in a teaching school; a CEO of a MAT; an Opportunity Area board member; and a trustee of various MATs.

### 2.1.7 Qualitative case studies

During the early stages of the programme, case-study visits were carried out with eight schools across the three waves of TSP: four primary and four secondary schools; three in the north of England, four in the midlands and one in the south; and seven in urban locations and one rural school (see Appendix 1, Table 4 for further details on the characteristics of the schools and interviewees). Interviews were carried out with **63 members of staff**: ten senior leaders; 23 ECTs; eight NQTs (who had either started the programme or would be doing so from September 2019); 11 internal mentors; four external mentors<sup>7</sup>; and seven teachers who were not participating in the programme.

The expectation was to re-visit all eight schools at the end of the programme to carry out follow-up interviews to explore further progress and impact. However, due to school closures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, only two schools were revisited (one primary and one secondary school). Interviews across the two visits were carried out with **13 members of staff**: two senior leaders; five ECTs; one mentor; one school governor; and four teachers not involved in the programme to gain a broader perspective. Vignettes from these two schools, which explore the types and impacts of support received through the programme can be found in Appendix 3.

There was some overlap between the individuals interviewed face-to-face during case-study visits and those already interviewed by telephone. This was the case for eight senior leaders and one internal mentor (interviewed by telephone at baseline and then in more depth face-to-face during initial visits to schools). One ECT was interviewed during an initial visit and then by telephone at the end of the programme. There was no overlap, however, between the individuals interviewed during an end-point visit and by telephone at the end of the programme.

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<sup>7</sup> In some cases, mentors worked within the same schools as the ECTs receiving support ('internal mentors'), while in other cases mentors were sourced externally from outside the school ('external mentors').



### 3. Recruitment and retention situation of schools at baseline

This section details the teacher recruitment and retention experiences of TSP schools *prior* to their involvement in the programme. It draws on data from the baseline senior leader survey and interviews with 50 senior leaders conducted at the start of the programme.

#### 3.1 Challenges schools were facing in recruiting teachers

In the baseline survey, senior leaders were asked how easy or difficult recruiting suitable teachers had been in the previous 12 months for different year groups (for primary senior leaders) and subjects (for secondary senior leaders). Further details can be found in Figures 8, 9 and 10 in the technical appendix. The findings suggested that:

- around a half of primary senior leaders reported difficulty in filling vacancies in Key Stage 2 (KS2), Key Stage 1 (KS1) and early years, with slightly more high levels of difficulty experienced in KS2. In addition, more than half of these senior leaders were experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff with specific specialisms (e.g. science, maths, literacy, ICT and languages)
- secondary senior leaders were experiencing higher levels of difficulty recruiting suitable teachers compared to primary senior leaders, although there was variability between different subjects
- more than three-fifths of secondary senior leaders were experiencing high levels of difficulty in recruiting suitable teachers for KS3/4 physics (88 per cent), KS3/4 chemistry (85 per cent), KS3/4 computer science (79 per cent), KS3/4 maths (78 per cent), KS3/4 general science (74 per cent), KS3/4 biology (74 per cent) and KS3/4 English (66 per cent)
- senior leaders reported that the two greatest recruitment challenges were a shortage of suitable teachers and the location of the school (both were reported by more than two-thirds of senior leaders). Other challenges included competition from other schools, the school's Ofsted rating and because the school was not able to offer a competitive salary.

Echoing the survey data, the main recruitment challenges, which many of the 50 interviewed senior leaders reported facing prior to their involvement in the TSP were a **general teacher shortage** (nationally and locally) and **the location of their school**. These challenges resulted in only a few, if any, applicants for vacant posts and, if there were applicants, they were not always of the required quality (for example, they were

inexperienced NQTs or ECTs who were not considered to have the necessary skills, teaching experience or resilience for the advertised roles).

Some senior leaders thought that **teachers were reluctant to teach in what they described as deprived, remote or expensive areas**. The challenging nature of some evaluation schools' contexts (often relating to Ofsted grade, the proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN), the number of safeguarding cases, and behavioural issues) was also said to be a deterrent for applicants. As one senior leader commented:

When you are in special measures...that puts off a significant number of colleagues from wanting to apply to a school in challenging circumstances. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

In addition, if anyone did apply they were not always considered right for, or to understand, the school context.

Some senior leaders reported that their schools faced **competition from other schools** perceived to be 'better', or which could offer a higher salary. Some schools were just outside of London and could not compete with London weighting. Other challenges included changes to the school structure (including leadership change and academisation) and more unique issues, such as the school being portrayed negatively by the local media.

Low numbers of applicants often led to **multiple rounds of recruitment**, which was considered expensive. Senior leaders also reported that they sometimes **had to compromise on the quality of teachers** (for example employing teachers without all of the required skills or experience) or rely on short-term contracts or supply teachers. As one senior leader said, '*you obviously end up taking a vast amount of supply, which has ongoing costs, which are significantly higher than mainstream posts*'.

Recruitment challenges were also reported to have a **detrimental impact on the workload of existing staff** who had to cover lessons, support struggling teachers (if poor quality teachers were recruited), or step into additional uncovered roles. As one senior leader commented, '*it puts pressure on the staff who have to carry [poor quality teachers] through and support them*'.

Also echoing the survey data, some of the 50 interviewed senior leaders reported **difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers**. This included the shortage subjects identified in the survey as well as PE. As one senior leader said, '*we are no longer in a position to be able to recruit a biology teacher to teach biology or a PE teacher to teach PE*'. The negative impact of unsuccessful or unsuitable recruitment on staff morale,

workload and wellbeing, school culture, pupil learning and progress, and standards were ongoing concerns for some senior leaders.

### 3.2 Recruitment methods schools were using

In the baseline survey, senior leaders reported using a wide range of recruitment methods prior to their involvement in the TSP. The most commonly used by more than half were: using the school's website, local networking/word of mouth, advertising through national education press, and engagement with a teacher training provider. Further details can be found in Figure 11 in the technical appendix.

The 50 senior leaders who were interviewed at the start of the programme described a similar range of **recruitment methods** that they were using prior to participating in the TSP, as well as some additional approaches. These included:

- **links with teacher training providers**, including offering placements to students from teaching schools and universities and then subsequently recruiting them
- **a 'grow your own' approach**, for example through school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) or School Direct programmes or 'growing' support staff into teaching roles
- **word of mouth** and '*refer a friend*' incentives for current teachers
- **taking Teach First graduates**
- **recruiting through agencies**, although the high costs associated with this approach had an impact on school budgets.

Additional recruitment methods included secondments and general movement within MATs, use of social media, recruiting from abroad and recruitment fairs. Many senior leaders considered that advertisements, particularly in the national press, were not an effective recruitment method.

### 3.3 Challenges schools were facing in retaining teachers

In the baseline survey, senior leaders in primary and secondary schools were also asked about the level of staff turnover their school had experienced in the last 12 months. While more than half of the senior leaders reported low levels of turnover among NQTs, recently qualified teachers and senior leaders, between 19 and 31 per cent of senior leaders experienced higher levels of turnover for these roles. **Reported levels of turnover tended to be higher among 'experienced classroom teachers'** (just less than two-fifths of primary respondents and a quarter of secondary respondents reported higher levels of turnover for this group). Further details can be found in Figure 12 in the technical appendix.

**Higher levels of turnover were reported by primary senior leaders for KS2 teachers**, compared to KS1 and early years teachers, with more than two-fifths of senior leaders reporting high turnover for KS2 teachers. Further details can be found in Figure 13 in the technical appendix.

The secondary subjects in which secondary senior leaders reported the highest levels of turnover were **KS3/4 physics, KS3/4 English, KS3/4 general science, KS3/4 chemistry, KS3/4 modern foreign languages, KS3/4 maths and KS3/4 biology**. Just over a quarter and up to two-fifths of senior leaders reported high turnover for these subjects. Further details can be found in Figure 14 in the technical appendix.

Senior leaders surveyed reported that **the three greatest challenges to teacher retention were teacher workload, location of the school and school finances** (which were reported by two-fifths or more senior leaders). Other challenges included the size/structure of the school, competition from other schools, and a lack of opportunities for progression. Further details can be found in Figure 15 in the technical appendix.

During the interviews undertaken with 50 senior leaders at the start of the programme, **a change of school leadership was cited as one of the main reasons for staff turnover**. New headteachers in post often make changes to staffing, leading to a reduction in teacher numbers or, in some cases, teachers do not like the change in leadership and make the choice to leave.

Interviewed senior leaders also echoed the survey findings by reporting other key retention challenges related to **teacher workload and the pressure of the job** and school location. Some reported that **the challenging nature of their school contexts** was a reason why some teachers chose to leave.

However, there was thought to be some **positive turnover**. As one senior leader said, *'you can't retain people forever, because they leave for positive reasons too'*. This included movement for promotion (including within a MAT) or to pursue development opportunities that their current school could not offer. A headteacher also said, *'there is only so much growth that a small school can offer. We are fantastic at development...but there is a glass ceiling'*.

Some teachers left to start a family or to re-locate geographically (sometimes to be closer to home or due to high property prices). Some senior leaders reported offering flexible working opportunities as a retention strategy, although others said they found this difficult to implement. Additional perceived reasons for teacher turnover included teachers being attracted to higher salaries in the private sector and teachers moving into supply teaching.

### 3.4 Measures schools were using to retain teachers

The measures that around two-thirds or more surveyed senior leaders reported that they had been using to retain teachers in their school over the last 12 months prior to their involvement in the TSP were: **CPD/training, career development (for example promotion or additional leadership responsibilities) and collaborative working**. Other measures used by more than two-fifths of senior leaders included workload reduction initiatives, additional non-contact time for planning/marking, flexible working and staff team-building/morale-building exercises. Further details can be found in Figure 16 in the technical appendix.

Responses from the 50 senior leaders who were interviewed at the start of the programme echoed the survey findings. They reported a range of similar retention measures, including:

- **the offer of CPD**, including leadership courses, behaviour management training and subject-specific CPD
- **offering teachers promotion or additional responsibilities** (including Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs), associate senior leadership team (SLT) roles with extra pay, and shared responsibilities distributed across small groups of teachers)
- **strategies to reduce workload** (including minimising administrative tasks and meetings)
- **a focus on teacher wellbeing** and strategies demonstrating that the school valued teachers
- **providing sufficient and focussed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time** each week.

A minority of senior leaders had **increased pay or offered financial incentives** to try to retain teachers (including paying a geographical fringe payment just outside of the boundary, renting a house for NQTs, and giving a retention bonus), **or offered flexible working arrangements**.

## 4. Engagement with the TSP

This section explores why senior leaders and ECTs engaged with the TSP. It draws on data from the baseline senior leader and teacher surveys and interviews with 50 senior leaders and 51 ECTs conducted at the start of the programme.

### 4.1 Why did participants take up TSP support?

#### 4.1.1 Senior leaders

One of the questions asked in the senior leader survey was why senior leaders had decided that their schools should participate in the TSP. A key reason, reported by more than four-fifths of respondents, was because mentoring support for early-career teachers was available. Other common reasons, reported by more than half of respondents, were: to improve teacher recruitment; the support was free to access; to reduce teacher turnover; and because system leader support was available. Smaller proportions reported having chosen to participate to build local partnerships or to join national programmes. DfE management information showed that the most common national programmes that schools had participated in were Teacher Subject Specialism Training (TSST), Teach First, School Direct and High Potential Senior Leaders. Further details can be found in Figure 18 in the technical appendix.

The 50 senior leaders who were interviewed at the start of the programme reported similar reasons for engaging in the TSP to the survey sample. Many saw the value of participating **to support them to recruit and retain quality teachers**:

I have got a recruitment issue and, as far as I'm concerned, anything that might be able to help us is worth trying. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Some senior leaders saw the potential for a **broader impact on retention across their MAT**:

I am very keen to explore anything that might help us to retain quality teachers...these could be shared across the [MAT] network of schools as well. There is an opportunity to impact more widely. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

In addition, some senior leaders noted that the **financial provision and free support** were key reasons for their school's participation. As one senior leader said, '*the financial incentive was massive [for our school]*'.

Regarding system leader support, many senior leaders were relatively new to their position in the school or facing new challenges, so they hoped to benefit from **access to other voices of experience and leadership** to support them in their role.

In terms of the specific support to retain ECTs, many senior leaders felt that **ECTs were an under-supported group of teachers who would benefit from additional support**<sup>8</sup>. They highlighted that support in schools tended to focus on NQTs and should be extended beyond this in order to retain teachers during the early years of their career. As one senior leader commented:

After NQT, sometimes recently qualified teachers are forgotten and they're just expected to get on with it, and we've not been able to cater specifically for this group. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Senior leaders reported that they wanted to use this **targeted support** (mentoring, CPD and non-contact time) to help ECTs acquire new knowledge, challenge and develop their practice, identify issues and resolve them independently, feel empowered, motivated and valued within their role, increase their confidence and improve their wellbeing. In turn, senior leaders hoped that this would have an impact on recruitment and retention and help to grow capacity in their schools.

Senior leaders' decisions to participate in the internal mentoring strand of the TSP were driven by a **desire to raise standards** across their schools and to **support, develop, and retain middle or senior leaders, as well as ECTs**.

Senior leaders recognised that supporting ECTs was **beneficial not only to their school, but to the wider profession**, with one leader commenting, *'if we can get that right then people will flourish early and then not leave the profession after four or five years, because it's too hard'*.

#### 4.1.2 Early-career teachers

The teacher survey asked ECTs how they came to participate in TSP. The vast majority were asked to participate by their school, which was to be expected as the decision for the school to engage with the strands of support was made by senior leaders.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that interviews with Wave 1 senior leaders took place prior to the publication of the DfE's [Early Career Framework](#) (January 2019), which supports structured training and support for early-career teachers in five core areas (behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours).

Similarly, many of the 51 ECTs interviewed at the start of the programme had been asked to participate by their school rather than volunteering. However, they could see the benefit of involvement in the programme. Many were keen to **develop their teaching practice** and felt that the mentoring and CPD would provide them with an opportunity to do so. As one ECT said, *'it's a great opportunity to develop my own practice and make sure that I'm offering the absolute best possible outcomes to the children in my care'*. Some ECTs mentioned elements of their classroom practice which they particularly wanted to improve, such as managing behaviour or raising pupil engagement and attainment. Some ECTs also hoped for support with managing workload, marking and providing feedback to pupils.

A small number of ECTs currently fulfilling leadership roles, such as subject lead or head of department, thought that the programme could provide them with the support and knowledge necessary to fill gaps in their leadership knowledge and experience. Others wanted to develop the necessary expertise to move into these types of roles.

Several ECTs were keen to access any **general additional support and CPD**. As two ECTs said, *'the more support I was going to get the better'* and, *'a chance for a little more CPD and a chance for a little more time is gold dust to any teacher'*.

Many of the ECTs interviewed at baseline recognised that teachers in the earlier stages of their career struggle more and they appreciated that this was being acknowledged and support was being offered to help relieve pressure. As one ECT reported:

I think it sounded like a good opportunity, because I do think those of us in our first five years<sup>9</sup> definitely seem to struggle and [are] the ones who leave. – *Wave 3 ECT*

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<sup>9</sup> Note that teachers eligible for the programme were those who were in their second to fourth year of teaching.



## 5. System leader support for senior leaders

This section describes how system leader support was delivered to schools and what worked well and less well. The findings are based on interviews with eight system leaders and feedback from end-point interviews with 32 senior leaders.

### 5.1 System leaders' relevant experience for their role in the TSP

The majority of the eight system leaders interviewed were also NLEs (helping to support and improve the quality of education and leadership in schools across the country), which is how they had heard about the TSP. Several mentioned that they held an interest in retaining teachers in the profession and felt their experience was relevant to the programme. One system leader, for example, said:

Our school doesn't seem to have those problems [recruitment and retention]. Whenever we recruit, we seem to get a field, we hang onto staff, we retain staff and have very little turnover of staff, so I just thought we might have something to offer to the programme. –  
*System leader*

Most of the eight system leaders referred to previous recruitment and retention experience. On the whole, they felt in a position to share good practice from their own schools, and to draw examples and support from strategic networks of schools they had supported previously. The majority of these system leaders had attended one day of training on the TSP held at the DfE. Several also mentioned that they had received NLE training, for example the NLE induction refresher days. In addition, they had accessed information online, for example, documents on strategies for supporting schools.

### 5.2 Matching system leaders to schools

Altogether, the eight system leaders who were interviewed supported 25 schools between them: two supported one school only; one supported two schools; a further two system leaders worked with three schools each; and the remaining three supported five schools each. The majority said they had not worked with their TSP schools previously.

Regardless of whether system leaders reported being involved in selecting the school(s) that they worked with or being allocated schools, they indicated that they were **happy with their matched schools**. In a few cases, system leaders reported that they contributed to the decision and that the match was based on criteria such as the system

leader's skillset. However, the majority of system leaders reported that they were given no choice and were happy with that. Some schools were local to the system leaders and others were further afield but, in each case, system leaders described the travelling and the time away from their own school as manageable (although a minority noted that the daily financial allowance was not sufficient to cover time and transport costs).

The majority of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that their match with a system leader had been successful. Several reported that their **system leader was approachable, enthusiastic and collaborative** and that they were able to contact them about '*pretty much anything*'. As two senior leaders commented:

I liked the NLE when I met her, she was really enthusiastic, and I thought "yes, I'd like to work with you". I trusted her to work with our school, I respected her straight away, and she's been really helpful. It's sometimes a lonely job as a headteacher, and I've enjoyed having somebody that I respect work with me. - *Wave 2 senior leader*

She [system leader] is obviously very experienced and skilled in her profession, but also is a very personable person. You can really open up to her and be honest and, because you can be that honest, you get the best out of the programme. So for me she has been instrumental really in that support and drive. - *Wave 2 senior leader*

At end-point, inappropriate matching was only mentioned by a minority of the 32 senior leaders, and issues with matching tended to relate to school context and geographic location. For example, one senior leader observed that the relationship had not worked because the system leader's school and the TSP school had completely different cohorts of pupils with very different characteristics and the two schools were also geographically too far apart (although the system leader had felt this was manageable).

### **5.3 Amount and nature of support provided by system leaders**

Management information at programme level showed that the number of days of system leader support varied between schools. Just less than three-quarters of schools were funded to receive between five and six days of system leader support, while just less than a fifth were receiving less than four days of support and less than one in ten were receiving more than six days of support. Further details are provided in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 MI data on number of system leader support days**

Number of funded system leader days	Percentage of schools
Less than four days	17
Four days	7
Five days	10
Six days	61
More than six days	6

Note: based on management information from 315 schools.

Source: DfE management information from school grant agreements

All of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at the end of the programme reported that they had received initial system leader support with **action planning**. System leaders had helped them to reflect on key issues faced with recruitment and retention, assess the effectiveness of current actions and identify new actions to be incorporated in their action plans. Senior leaders valued the bespoke nature of action plans, which were tailored to their school's individual needs rather than being 'off-the-shelf'. As one senior leader said:

I was reassured [by the system leader] that it wasn't 'here is a specific package that you must trial and implement exactly the way that we say', but that it was very much tailoring what would be an appropriate package for your school – *Wave 3 senior leader*

During the action planning stage, system leaders also supported schools with **applications for TSP funding** from the DfE, which were usually approved promptly. Following approval of their action plan by the DfE, the vast majority of schools continued to receive some form of **ongoing support from their system leader**.

Ongoing support included **coaching or mentoring**. 'Coaching' tended to be seen as *empowering the individual* and 'mentoring' as more *instructional*. In some cases, the focus of support was on one senior leader and, in others, it was extended to include the senior leadership team, middle leaders and teachers. One system leader supporting multiple schools said that most of the schools opted for coaching and mentoring for heads, deputy heads and assistant heads to improve leadership capacity. They noted, *'that in itself has [contributed to] retention, because they've been getting access to the coaching, which they wouldn't ordinarily have got'*.

The type of **on-going support that system leaders and senior leaders referred to was varied and bespoke** and included support with: leadership development;

recruitment strategies; sourcing or providing CPD; workload reduction; and staffing structures and workforce planning.

The **leadership development** that system leaders provided related to topics such as: demonstrating that staff are valued; improving communication; the importance of reviewing the purpose of the SLT; and ensuring there is an overarching SLT strategy. In some cases, the leadership support was targeted at headteachers, some of whom were new to the role and appreciated support with their '*steep learning curve*'.

However, in some cases, leadership support was targeted at the broader SLT to '*build capacity*' and distribute leadership beyond the headteacher. As one headteacher said, '*it's about empowering leadership to be confident in the role*'. For example, in one school, the system leader had coached an assistant head who had been identified by the school to become a pastoral lead, focusing the coaching on pupil wellbeing and pastoral support. In another school, the system leader had provided tailored coaching for two members of the senior team as they worked towards professional qualifications. This system leader's mentoring and coaching was described as 'excellent' and had supported the school's two faculty leads to complete their NPQSL. In another example, after delivering training on workload reduction, the system leader shared resources with the school's senior leaders to enable them to follow up and further develop activities with their ECTs. Some senior leaders had also received support in '*managing upwards*' (for example, how to influence decision-making within a Trust).

There were also examples of system leaders developing the leadership skills of middle leaders, some of whom were ECTs. This most often involved middle leaders accessing training or coaching via the system leader's school, or working directly with a senior or middle leader from the partner school. This included support to complete the NPQML.

In terms of support with **recruitment strategies**, there were examples of the system leader support reaching all schools within a Trust. This included help with wording for advertisements, school branding and marketing. One school leader commented that it was a priority to get system leader support with marketing to '*incentivise applications*'. Another said:

The system leader has provided some good ideas about how the school can better sell themselves in the adverts and in the recruitment pack we send out to potential applicants. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

System leaders were also reported to have **sourced or provided CPD for both senior leaders and teachers**. One system leader had cascaded training he had undertaken on

coaching to internal mentors supporting ECTs and noted that it was well-received. Another system leader outlined how she had designed a bespoke coaching programme for the headteacher to deliver to ECTs and new leaders, *'because the headteacher had a leadership team in its infancy, she wanted to be the coach and she had the ability to be the coach'*. The system leader helped with designing the coaching programme using a template based on what she had already tried at her own school and tailoring it to their setting. Two senior leaders reported that their system leader was delivering CPD to ECTs within their schools. One said, *'the system leader has been key in developing the CPD package that will be delivered specifically to the teachers involved in the programme'*. Another commented, *'part of it will be looking at CPD for myself as a leader, but also looking at support for the early-career teachers'*.

Some senior leaders who were interviewed also mentioned receiving **support on workload reduction** from system leaders. For example, in one school, the system leader was going to *'look through the school's systems and processes to see if they can improve any of these to reduce workload'*. A senior leader in another school said that the system leader was *'looking at how we can ensure workload is kept to a minimum'*.

There were also examples of system leaders providing **support relating to staffing structures and workforce planning**. This included mapping the current staffing structure and planning for what would be needed over the coming years in line with the curriculum offer. As one system leader and headteacher commented:

He [the headteacher] has said that the biggest impact has been the workforce mapping model, linking it to the curriculum offer for the growing school. We developed our training to be applicable in primary and secondary and he was able to create his own format. – *System leader*

It's about making sure we have a sustainable staffing structure...I think just an opportunity to look at our staffing structure with fresh eyes. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Other support provided less commonly to senior leaders related to: curriculum design; an application to become a teaching school; improving the quality of teaching in specific subjects; developing partnerships, e.g. with a SCITT provider, teaching school, universities or Teach First to secure NQTs; engaging with other CPD programmes, such as TSST; providing support to geographically isolated schools by connecting them to existing networks of schools; the implementation of Ofsted recommendations and/or specific elements of the school development plan; and working with middle leaders to improve staff morale and relationships and to avoid losing staff due to conflicts.

Some senior leaders reported that the **support provided had extended beyond the programme brief** and enabled them to draw on their system leader's broader knowledge and experience to tackle a range of challenges they were facing. This included advice on general headship issues (such as managing staff, and workload and wellbeing issues).

System leaders also **commonly directed support at ECTs**. One system leader described how he offered a bespoke support system for them, *'it was a highly personal, highly individual response. What works for one colleague will not work for someone else...this issue is not I can't teach, it's I can't cope'*. For example, he developed time management strategies and delivered CPD on wellbeing, work-life balance, managing stress, behaviour management, and how to make feedback and marking manageable.

One school's involvement in this strand is illustrated in Example A.

#### **Example A: System leader support**

The headteacher of a primary school, which was going through the process of joining a Trust after being a local authority maintained school, was receiving ongoing support from the system leader. There was an existing relationship as the system leader was also linked to the school as an NLE. The headteacher felt that their working relationship on the TSP was particularly effective as they had worked together before, so were familiar with each other. The TSP enabled more frequent meetings, which were focussed specifically on recruitment and retention issues. As part of the support, the system leader carried out a review of the school's recruitment, retention and development practices. The headteacher said, *'she's very much been available to provide ideas about how we could move things on'* and, *'she's made suggestions about what other schools are doing...there have been lots of discussions about strategies that we haven't tried yet and what might be available to staff'*. The system leader had also signposted the school to appropriate CPD and advice. Support had been provided on an *'ad hoc'* basis, *'as things have arisen... it's been very easy to approach her at any point'*. It had also been provided in a variety of ways, including day-long meetings, emails, and *'numerous half an hour conversations'*.

System leaders reported that **face-to-face meetings, mostly at the TSP schools, were the most common mode of support**; one system leader noted that there was more face-to-face contact at the beginning of the programme, while another observed that there were more face-to-face meetings with schools with larger TSP budgets. Visits were supplemented with ad hoc phone and email contact.

## 5.4 What worked well in the provision of system leader support?

### 5.4.1 The value of system leaders' knowledge, expertise and networks

The 32 senior leaders who were interviewed at the end of the programme highly valued the **knowledge, expertise and access to networks provided by their system leader**. As one senior leader commented:

The opportunity to work with an experienced senior leader from another school from outside our own academy network has a huge amount of benefit. To draw on another headteacher's expertise and knowledge I think is something you wouldn't want to turn down. –  
*Wave 3 senior leader*

Many of the senior leaders who were interviewed reported that they had benefitted from their system leader sharing their knowledge of recruitment and retention strategies, which had proved effective in their own schools. Examples included:

- developing a caring and kind school ethos and culture where staff support each other. One system leader, for example, explained, *'we look after each other...It's really hard work looking after each other. It's actually about being specific about how you support your colleagues'*
- explaining and discussing the rationale for policies and practice with staff so that they really understand their relevance and their significance to pupils
- creating career development opportunities for staff by, for example, an internal recruitment and learning support system where staff, including leaders, are given the opportunity to train and develop for promotion internally so they commit to the school
- nurturing close links with a local SCITT to ensure that ITT students placed in the school are suited to the school's particular context.

Some of the senior leaders who were interviewed particularly valued their **system leader's knowledge of effective CPD**. For example, one headteacher reported that their system leader had recommended training for their in-house ECT mentor, *'that was great as it meant that I didn't have to start surfing around finding it, he suggested something that was good'*.

## 5.4.2 System leaders acting as ‘coach’

The senior leaders who were interviewed welcomed the **coaching approach** taken by their system leaders. One likened it to the support provided by a School Improvement Partner<sup>10</sup>, where the headteacher discussed issues and thoughts and reflected on next steps, with the guidance of an experienced leader:

It was a chance for me to sort of talk about issues that I had and just a chance for me to talk around my thoughts and devise in my head a strategy and a way forward. And that sounds really woolly, but was incredibly useful. It is a very lonely job being a headteacher and sometimes if you are wanting to talk about things that are to do with, for example staffing, you can't talk to your deputy about it, because actually they might be part of that. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

System leaders reflected on the positive role they were able to play in supporting and coaching their schools and, in particular, the fact that they were **supporting school improvement, but in a non-judgemental way**, *‘the powerful bit of it is that you're not school improvement, so I'm not going in there judging them...I'm not interested in their data, I'm supporting them’*.

## 5.4.3 System leaders' support in monitoring progress

Senior leaders who were interviewed reported that their system leaders had been **helpful in ensuring they maintained their progress towards the objectives** set out in their action plan, noting, for example that, *‘knowing that you have got somebody that is going to keep coming back to check you are doing what you have said you'll do, there is no replacement for that sometimes’* and that, *‘understanding that you are going to be accountable for the work that you have said you are going to do, there is nothing like that to make sure that you keep returning to it’*.

## 5.4.4 Access to system leader's school and networks

In addition to mentoring and coaching, senior leaders reported that system leaders had provided other types of valuable support. This included:

- **staff accessing training and practice enhancement through the system leader's school.** As one senior leader explained:

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<sup>10</sup> School Improvement Partners provided professional challenge and support to schools, helping the leadership to evaluate its performance, identify priorities for improvement, and plan effective change.



It opened up a doorway for all of our staff to access some training if needed and it was basically wherever we wanted they [the system leader's school] would do their best to try and help us out with what it was, so, best practice visits, sharing a scheme of work. We conducted a science audit because of it. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

- **accessing subject-specific advice at the system leader's school.** For example, one senior leader explained how her maths lead had worked with the maths lead at the system leader's school who was a lead teacher for the National Maths Hub. This enabled the teacher to devise a focused action plan:

She [the teacher] was able to see operationally how the school ran their maths, how strategically they ran the maths and also to have conversations with him about how we might, in the future, once he has finished the support, move forward on that. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

- **access to system leaders' networks**, for instance with other headteachers, '*she [the system leader] has also been able to support me in networking with other heads and a group that she is involved in, which has been really helpful*', or to other teaching and learning organisations such as the 'Shine Alliance', which was reported to be very supportive and to include key speakers and innovative people who share products and information.

## 5.5 What worked less well in the provision of system leader support?

A small number of the 32 senior leaders who were interviewed at the end of the programme reported that they had had no or little contact with their system leader following the initial action planning phase. However, this was not always negative and, in some cases, senior leaders did not require ongoing support. For example, two system leaders reported that their schools did not require sustained system leader support for recruitment and retention as their key requirement was for ECT mentoring and non-contact time:

They didn't need my input, they were quite happy to have the extra non-contact time or mentoring for people, but that's not based upon any need for me. Once they've got that in place then...you feel you're an additional thing for them to deal with rather than being helpful. – *System leader*

In other cases, support had been provided in a different way, or a 'light touch' approach was sufficient and met the needs of the school. For example, one system leader had arranged for their TSP school to be linked to external mentors who were supplying ongoing support to the senior leader.

However, in a minority of schools, the provision of system leader support to schools did not work as effectively as it might have done due to two main challenges that are detailed below.

### **5.5.1 Lack of time**

Several interviewees reported constraints on both senior leaders' and system leaders' time, which impacted on both the action planning process and ongoing support.

In terms of action planning, a small number of senior leaders reported that this process had not been as effective as it might have been. This was reported to be due to a perceived lack of system leader time in supporting the action planning process, which took '*a huge amount of time*'. In one case, the senior leader felt the action plan drafted by the system leader was inappropriate, partly due to time constraints, and the senior leader had rewritten it. Clearly, for this model to work, it is important that the system leader has sufficient time to fully support the TSP school.

### **5.5.2 Lack of engagement of schools**

The lack of engagement of TSP schools was sometimes reported to have negatively impacted on the effectiveness of system leader support. For example, a minority of the eight system leaders interviewed reported challenges in encouraging some schools to go beyond the '*bare bones*' of the programme and work with staff more broadly to increase morale, decrease workload and increase retention. This lack of engagement could also impact on the effectiveness of the system leader support. For example, one system leader described how a senior leader from his school travelled to the TSP school to provide mentoring at the same time every week, but the ECTs were often not available for their mentoring session, '*they would say teachers can't come to the session, because they've had to teach or cover, but they would never ring us up. There was a lack of value to people's time and what we were seeing was why people want to leave*'.

## 6. Mentoring for early-career teachers

This section describes how mentoring for ECTs was delivered and what worked well and less well. Where they were reported, distinctions between internal and external mentoring have been drawn out. It draws on the baseline teacher survey as well as qualitative data collected throughout the programme, which included interviews with a total of 55 senior leaders, 51 ECTs and 27 mentors. Baseline data is drawn from interviews with 50 senior leaders, 51 ECTs and 25 mentors. End-point data is drawn from interviews with 32 senior leaders, 15 ECTs and 11 mentors.

Most senior leaders and ECTs taking part in the interviews reported that ECTs had been allocated a mentor. In most cases, this was an internal mentor, although some had external mentors. Less frequently, ECTs had an internal and external mentor. A minority of interviewees reported no mentoring opportunities or mentoring to be very infrequent.

### 6.1 Mentoring or coaching?

When discussing the mentoring strand, the **ECTs and mentors interviewed at both the start and end of the programme frequently used the term ‘coaching’ to describe the approach being taken.** Coaching was perceived to be more about facilitating and empowering ECTs to resolve issues and challenges themselves, with the coach supporting this process. A coach would generally not offer their opinion, but help the individual find their own solution. ECTs and mentors characterised the sessions as *‘professional conversations’* where ECTs led the sessions and had agency over what was discussed. Mentoring was perceived to be more instructional and directive, with mentors drawing on their knowledge and expertise to support those with less experience.

This suggests that the TSP’s use of the language ‘mentoring’ is not reflective of the approach being taken in schools. However, for the purposes of this report, we will continue to use the term ‘mentoring’ for consistency.

Example B summarises the coaching training provided in one school.

### Example B: Mentoring or coaching?

The senior leader at this secondary school used a local consultant to provide coaching training for internal mentors. The consultant delivered two afternoon sessions and provided one-to-one supervisions with the mentors every four weeks. The senior leader emphasised that the coaching approach was about facilitating individuals' development and supporting them to find their own solutions to challenges, and it had no links to performance management.

One mentor commented, *'it really changed my mind about what coaching is, I clearly was clueless and now kind of get it and how powerful it can be'*. Another mentor said, *'it's not just helped me coach colleagues, it's helped me manage behaviour...it could revolutionise how we interact with staff, students, everybody'*.

The mentors and senior leader were in agreement that *'the coaching training has been excellent'*. The senior leader said, *'it's developed them as coaches. That, in turn, has had a positive impact on our early-career teachers'*.

## 6.2 Choosing internal or external mentors

When making the choice between using internal or external mentors, the 50 senior leaders interviewed at baseline most often reported that the **internal capacity** of their more experienced staff (in terms of workload and expertise) was the key factor driving this choice. Their decisions were often based on whether they had sufficient internal capacity to facilitate internal mentoring and whether they wanted to capitalise on the opportunity to build their internal mentoring capacity.

Where internal mentoring was favoured, this was because: schools had existing high-quality mentors; internal staff understood the context of the school; there were existing relationships between staff; and/or because it was a CPD opportunity for internal staff, which would allow them to be *'further upskilled'* and, in turn, retained. Comments included:

In-school mentors have vital contextual, in-situ knowledge of what early-career teachers are experiencing and so would be far better placed to offer this mentorship. – *Wave 1 Senior leader*

We've got talented people within our organisation and I think we can use those talented people effectively. – *Wave 3 Senior leader*

Senior leaders commonly reported that **internal mentors were experienced, high-calibre middle and senior leaders**, such as deputy headteachers, assistant

headteachers and heads of faculty/department. They were also often SLEs or lead practitioners. In a small number of cases, the headteacher or head of school was providing mentoring support.

Some senior leaders **lacked confidence in the quality and skillset of potential external mentors**, often due to a lack of information about them. They also questioned how effective external mentors could be without a detailed working knowledge of their schools. They cited this as a reason for not using external mentors.

At baseline, some senior leaders were also **concerned that external mentors would not spend enough time with mentees** and that meetings would be infrequent. The evaluation data suggests that this was a valid concern as, in many cases, less time was allocated by external mentors than in-school mentors. Where internal mentors typically met their ECTs weekly, many external mentors met their ECTs once every half term. More information is provided in section 6.5.

Senior leaders who opted for external mentoring reported that it was because their school did not have the capacity to provide in-school mentoring, rather than because they had a preference for external mentoring. However, **some senior leaders actively chose external mentoring** as they wanted their ECTs to learn about effective practice and teaching in other schools. As one headteacher commented, *'it is important that they [ECTs] can see what life is like outside of this school'*. Some senior leaders also felt that they could learn from the external mentoring provided and potentially use elements of it as a model moving forward. In practice, external mentors were usually experienced teachers or leaders from a local outstanding school, often a teaching school, and/or based at the system leader's school.

In some cases, 'external' mentors had been provided from within a TSP school's Trust. There was one particular example of a Trust CEO observing and mentoring ECTs, which had led to a 'spin-off' benefit of the CEO re-thinking what the Trust-wide mentoring model should look like. This approach had also positively impacted on ECTs' confidence across the Trust, who would not usually have had this level of engagement with the CEO.

Sections 6.8 and 6.9 summarise the benefits and challenges in being matched with an internal or external mentor. **It seems there are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. What works most effectively appears to depend on the individual need of the mentee and the culture of the school.**

### 6.3 Mentor training and support

Senior leaders interviewed at baseline, who had chosen to bring in external mentors, reported having limited knowledge of mentors' prior experience and training. In contrast,

senior leaders using internal mentors selected experienced staff who they knew had the appropriate mentoring skills and training to execute the role effectively.

**All internal mentors were said to have had prior experience and training**, having at least mentored NQTs and trainee teachers and attended the training required to do so. Their level of training and qualifications varied and this tended to inform what additional training and support they were given as part of the programme. Many already had high levels of training and experience and had completed relevant qualifications, such as the NPQML, and so did not require additional support. Others attended in-school refresher training or were provided with more substantial support, for example specialist external training or on-going support with a coach or external consultant.

**Where training was provided, mentors reported that it was effective.** Only a small number of mentors felt that they would have benefitted from further training to refresh their skills.

**The majority of the 27 mentors interviewed during the programme were confident in delivering the mentoring support.** Some reported **receiving helpful in-school support** from their senior leadership team or lead practitioners for teaching and learning, or had approached other staff in school or external experts – such as, education welfare officers, SENCOs and educational psychologists – for more specialist support when the need arose.

## 6.4 Matching of mentors and mentees

This section primarily refers to the matching process that linked ECTs and their internal mentors.

Clear differences emerged from the interviews regarding the extent to which senior leaders, mentors, and mentees were involved in the matching process. Due to their seniority in school, **most of the in-school mentors reported being directly involved in being matched with ECTs.** When mentors were not directly involved, they were approached to confirm that they were happy with the decision that had been made.

**In contrast, only a minority of the ECTs who were interviewed at baseline reported having any input into the matching process.** Those that had an input had been allowed to voice their preference in terms of the mentor's skillset or experience and their area for development. However, despite their lack of input into the initial matching process, **the vast majority of the 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point were happy with their mentors**, felt they were well respected members of staff and had the necessary expertise to meet their needs. Some commented that their mentor was who they would have chosen. One ECT, for example, described their mentor as '*an ideal person*'.

**Internal mentors were typically matched with two or three ECTs to work with on a one-to-one basis.** The exceptions to this tended to be in smaller schools, particularly primary schools, where there was only one mentor in the school or only one eligible ECT participating.

**In around half of the schools that had opted for external mentoring, external mentors and ECTs were matched on a one-to-one basis.** In the other schools, external mentors mentored more than one ECT, but no more than four.

That said, a small minority of schools took a different approach, with some schools opting for a more free-form approach as exemplified in Example C below.

#### **Example C: Matching mentors with mentees**

This primary academy took a more free-form approach to providing mentoring support. The senior leadership team structured the support so that the ECTs weren't matched with one mentor but had *'informal designations'* with a range of different mentors who provided support with specific areas for development. For example, one ECT wanted to address the behaviour of some pupils with SEND and was paired with a mentor who was also the SENCO in order to develop strategies for these pupils. Once the ECT felt equipped to address this behaviour, they identified a new area for development and approached a mentor with the most relevant experience to support them. As one mentor commented, *'it's assigned according to the specialism of the person and their expertise within the MAT and so the ECTs work with the mentors based on their needs and the mentors' experience'*. The mentors in this school reported working with all 11 ECTs on the TSP. The senior leader reported the benefit of this model, *'we cover more ground and communicate more effectively'* and a mentor added that the approach helped to develop *'a consistency of approach'* within the classroom.

The teacher survey asked about the relationship between the ECT and their mentor, including whether they were also their line manager, worked at the same school or taught the same subject or key stage. There were notable differences between the mentoring relationships reported by teachers in primary and secondary schools. For example, where primary school mentors were internal staff, they were more likely to be the ECTs' line manager. The proportion of mentors teaching the same subject or key stage as their mentee was relatively low (just over a fifth reported this for primary and less than a fifth for secondary). In addition, primary school mentors were more likely to be external mentors than secondary school mentors (41 per cent compared to 15 per cent). Further details can be found in Figure 23 in the technical appendix.

The interviews also explored the relationship between ECTs and their mentors. While schools *'tried to fit people with the most relevant person'*, individual schools and Trusts

used different factors to establish who was the most relevant person. **Key factors informing this decision included the workload and availability of mentors, the specialism/key stage of mentors and ECTs, skillsets, the development needs of ECTs, existing relationships, phase (e.g. primary/secondary) and, for external mentoring, location was also a consideration.**

Echoing the survey findings, the interview data showed that, while some ECTs shared the same subject specialism/key stage as their mentor and worked in the same phase, this was not universally the case. There were varying views about how important this was and further data on this is included in sections 6.8 and 6.9. In some cases, the match was based on their teaching and learning skills. For example, one mentor was matched with their ECT *'because his weaknesses are my strengths'*. Many of the mentors commented that, due to their breadth of experience and whole-school perspective, they would be happy to work with any member of staff. In some cases, mentors already had a relationship with their ECT, but, again, this was not always the case.

## **6.5 Facilitating mentoring activities: time allocations and timing**

Interviews with senior leaders highlighted that, overall, **internal mentoring was scheduled more frequently than external mentoring.**

Senior leaders and mentors generally reported that the **internal mentoring usually included weekly mentoring or coaching sessions.** These weekly meetings tended to be arranged around the needs of the pupils affected and the workload and availability of the teachers involved. In addition to weekly meetings, several senior leaders noted that mentors had also engaged in half termly or termly meetings, often to review progress. A small number of schools had opted for a more flexible, ad hoc approach to the arrangement, which they felt better suited the needs of their school.

**Internal mentors were often flexible with their time** and able to accommodate other mentoring activities, such as lesson observations or team teaching sessions. Internal mentors largely reported that their schools were very supportive and accommodating of these more ad hoc activities, with one commenting that there was *'not really anything that I have requested that's been refused'*. Most of the internal mentors were keen to emphasise that they had an open door policy, so they were *'always in touch'* with their mentees. However, at the same time, they emphasised that they did not want to add to ECTs' workload and were happy to meet *'as and when needed'* as this mentor commented:

There have been lots of informal chats about how things are going, they have come to me with questions that we have worked through or



they would like a little bit of support with this, so could they have that support, that sort of thing. – *Wave 3 mentor*

Almost all senior leaders who had opted for external mentoring reported that they had **timetabled face-to-face meetings between the ECTs and the external mentors in advance** to ensure that staff could be released. The frequency of meetings varied across schools. Around half of the senior leaders reported that the external mentoring had taken place half termly, but mention was also made of weekly, fortnightly and termly meetings. ECTs receiving external mentoring typically reported that they met with their mentor on a half-termly or termly basis, often supplemented by support via email and telephone. ECTs generally preferred more frequent meetings, but this was dependent on their needs and preferences.

**External mentoring took place at both the ECTs' and mentors' schools.** This was often supplemented by visits to other settings to observe good practice as part of the mentoring support package. An example of how external mentoring worked in one school is provided in Example D below.

#### **Example D: Facilitating external mentoring**

A senior leader in this primary school reported that they chose an external mentor because they *'wanted somebody totally independent from our school'*, recognising it as an opportunity *'to go to another outstanding school'*. The mentor's school was in a different county and required an hour's drive to visit. The senior leader, mentor and ECTs reported that communication tended to be over email with periodic face-to-face meetings and visits. The ECTs and mentor agreed that, despite not being in the same school, there was a *'good dialogue'* between them. The ECTs also noted that the support from their mentor tended to be around specific, targeted areas for development, rather than working through day-to-day issues as they arose. One ECT commented, *'she's always available [over email], but day-to-day stuff you tend to bounce off a colleague'*.

The majority of ECTs interviewed reported having **regular additional non-contact time** to ensure that their time was *'ring-fenced'* for mentoring meetings and activities. There was considerable variation in the time allocated to ECTs for this support and how it was structured across schools. Most commonly, ECTs received **a weekly allocation of additional time**, but this was not the approach universally taken. For example, one ECT reported having weekly mentoring sessions and then being allowed to take one day off timetable each term to complete activities following the mentoring sessions, such as reflecting on feedback strategies and resources used in the classroom. In one primary school, the mentor reported that their ECTs had a weekly allocation of time, but could choose which lessons each week they wished to be released from. The mentor explained

that their programme had been *'very flexible'*, because the last thing they wanted was to try to develop ECTs when *'actually all they are doing is worrying about what's going on in the classroom, because it's the worst time in the week for them to be out of the classroom'*.

A small minority of ECTs reported that they did not receive any additional time for their mentoring activities, with one ECT commenting, *'I don't have anything additional unless I do it outside of school and in my own time'*. In one instance, an ECT had officially been given a timetable reduction to take part in the mentoring, but had not taken up this offer, because they did not want to disrupt any of their classes.

## 6.6 Facilitating mentoring activities: cover arrangements

There was consensus among interviewees that appropriate **cover arrangements were crucial to facilitating the mentoring support**. While some schools had used external supply staff on an ad hoc basis, others had employed an additional cover supervisor.

Senior leaders, mentors and ECTs highlighted the ongoing **tension between taking staff out of the classroom to facilitate TSP activities and not disrupting teaching and learning in the classroom**. One mentor commented that *'cover had probably been the biggest challenge'* as they had to ensure *'that the whole needs of the school are taken into the bigger picture'*. Senior leaders and mentors both described this as a *'difficult balance'*.

Some mentors reported finding ways to minimise the need to be out of the classroom and, therefore, reducing the need for cover. For example, some had made use of technology such as IRIS connect software<sup>11</sup> to provide feedback to mentees on their classroom practice. Mentees used the technology to record themselves teaching a lesson, which their mentors could then review. This minimised the need for additional release time and the cover arrangements required for face-to-face observations.

**Cover arrangements tended to work most effectively when cover was provided by the same staff member in school, who was known to the children**. For example, in one school, the phase leader covered the ECT when they were out of the classroom, while at another school an ECT reported that the school had *'employed somebody to cover'* them using the TSP funding. Where ad hoc or inconsistent external supply

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<sup>11</sup> IRIS connect is a lesson capture tool that allows teachers to record audio and video in the classroom and upload it either for their own use or to share with other teachers or schools (such as across a MAT). Our interviewees reported using this software to record and review their classroom practice, both individually and with their mentor. It was primarily used to provide examples of good and outstanding practice, support self-reflection and CPD, and demonstrate useful classroom strategies.

teachers were being used, some ECTs had concerns about the knock-on effects of this in the classroom and on their workload. For example, one ECT felt that unsuitable cover arrangements *'has probably increased my workload'* because *'when I've come back, I've had to phone parents, I've had to use behaviour management strategies, because the children were unsettled by me being out of class the day previously'*. Other concerns included increased workload due to the need to prepare cover lessons and the impact on children's learning if cover was provided by poor quality supply staff.

## 6.7 What mentoring has been provided?

During the end-point interviews, senior leaders, ECTs and mentors were asked about the mode and focus of the mentoring that had taken place during the programme.

### 6.7.1 Mode of support

Mentoring sessions were most often organised as mentoring meetings between the mentor and mentee, **both formal and informal**. The length of meetings was dependent on the needs of the ECT. As two mentors reported:

Sometimes the meetings have been 15 minutes, sometimes they have been an hour, and it just depends. We were quite flexible with it, and it is really what they need on the day or wanted to get out of it on the day. – *Wave 3 mentor*

With my current ECT, because she is experienced and she passed her NQT with flying colours, it is a more flexible approach rather than the structure, whereas my previous ECT, she needed more structure and reminders a bit more. – *Wave 3 mentor*

Senior leaders, ECTs and mentors reported that **mentoring often incorporated lesson observations to observe effective practice**. This could be within the ECTs' own schools or the schools of external mentors or system leaders. One senior leader noted, *'it is one thing to read it in a book and they know the theory, but they have got to see it from a great practitioner, because they don't actually know what it feels like'*. In addition, one ECT commented on observing lessons in their external mentor's school:

Having an external mentor has been good as it was nice to go to the other schools. We are only one form entry so if I'd have had an internal mentor, it would have to be someone who wasn't teaching Year 3. You get a different perspective when it is someone external.  
– *Wave 2 ECT*

**In-class support, shadowing, brokering CPD and identifying resources, joint planning and marking were also part of the mentoring support ECTs received.**

Where support was focused more on subject leadership, this included opportunities for shared subject monitoring activities (such as joint observations of other teachers).

A few internal mentors felt that their mentoring approach was influenced by how long they had known the mentee, for example if they had previously mentored the ECT as an NQT then their approach might be more informal in contrast to a new member of staff. In addition, some reported that their approach had 'evolved' over time as the role and responsibilities of their mentees had developed. However, a minority of mentors reported taking a similar approach with all of their mentees, *'the way we have approached the meetings and the conversations and things that we've had have been from a fairly similar perspective'*.

### **6.7.2 Focus of support**

Senior leaders and mentors reported that the focus of the **mentoring was bespoke and tailored** to the individual needs and personalities of the ECTs. As two mentors observed:

It was very clear they [the ECTs] all had very, very different needs. Some lacked confidence, some needed help finding things and places to go and, because I have taught in the area for a long time, I also had contacts in other schools, and so I sort of used those contacts to get us visits and things. I helped set up cover and things like that and tap in to funding for courses and stuff. – *Wave 3 mentor*

How I would talk to one or two of them [the ECTs] would be very different to how I would talk to another one or two of them, just because of the way they are as individuals, some of them are more outgoing, some of them are happier to talk openly and for some of them it is a bit more of an 'eeking a conversation out' type process. – *Wave 3 mentor*

A number of mentors reported undertaking an **initial assessment of mentees' needs and developing an action plan**. This could include a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and the development of SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-based) targets. In some cases, performance management information and feedback from the SLT was incorporated in the action planning process to help inform goals. One mentor reported that they *'did a SWOT analysis'* with their ECT to identify *'what [they] wanted to achieve out of the year'* and created *'a rolling programme [of] evaluating and building the training'* around these aspirations. Another commented, *'they're their [the ECT's] ideas, but I've tried to put it*

*into smaller chunks and have deadlines for each thing, getting them to think about how they can measure success'. Most ECTs reported that the focus of the mentoring was guided by them, as this ECT observed, 'it has been very much led by me. It's been something that I've identified that I'd like to do and improve upon and then we've reflected on how I could go about that'.*

Very few senior leaders set out topics or areas that all of their ECTs should cover, although **some senior leaders and mentors highlighted the importance of linking ECT support to wider school priorities**. One mentor reported that they wanted 'to make [the ECTs] see that they are having an impact and they are learning things that are benefitting everybody'. A senior leader also noted:

Some of it was focussed on some of the issues that the teachers had themselves, but also some of it was around implementation of the school needs. So, if we were doing stuff around maths, there would be some coaching around how to make sure that they [the ECTs] were embedding the structures and the routines that the school wished to be embedded. - *Wave 1 senior leader*

Where action plans had been devised, mentors often created a programme of sessions to work through specific pre-agreed topics and targets. However, other mentors took a less structured and flexible approach, addressing issues and challenges as they arose.

Support provided was dependent on the ECTs' stage of development, but **most commonly focused on developing teaching practice and/or middle or subject leadership**. In some cases, senior leaders reported that the focus of the mentoring had evolved during the course of the programme, moving from an initial focus on teaching practice to a focus on leadership and career development as the programme progressed.

**Support with aspects of classroom practice and teaching and learning** included: behaviour management (including positive reinforcement and growth mindset); subject knowledge (e.g. English, geography, maths); motivating students and raising aspirations; strategies for effective planning; marking; feedback and assessment; delivering pupil interventions; routines for learning; managing workload; time management; SEN/the work of a SENCO; safeguarding; the role of the form tutor; and parents' evenings.

**Support to develop subject leadership** included a range of subjects, including maths, PE and the early years. It focused on a range of leadership skills, such as: managing teaching and leadership commitments; curriculum development; people management; and subject leader monitoring and evaluation activities (such as conducting lesson observations, giving feedback and carrying out book scrutinies).

Some mentors had **facilitated opportunities for their mentees to shadow other leaders in school in order to better understand senior leadership roles**. They had

also offered support and guidance for ECTs enrolled on the NPQML and the NPQSL programmes. One ECT, for example, was seeking to move into leadership and become a head of department, and had used the mentoring support *‘to understand more about that process and understand the responsibilities’*.

## 6.8 What worked well in the provision of mentoring?

Overall, when the 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point were asked what had been the most valuable support provided through the TSP, several felt that mentoring was the most valuable aspect. As one ECT explained:

I do think having a mentor is probably the most useful, just because you are unsure if you’re doing the right thing 100 per cent of the time. Just being able to meet with someone and discuss it and get a bit of guidance is really helpful. Sometimes, it helps for them to give you your targets or solutions to problems that you’ve raised that you might not be able to come up with yourself. – *Wave 3 ECT*

The particularly successful elements of the mentoring strand are summarised below.

### 6.8.1 Successful matching

The majority of senior leaders, ECTs and mentors interviewed at end-point reported that both the internal and external mentoring had been beneficial and most ECTs and mentors reported that they had developed a positive and productive relationship as a result of effective matching. As two ECTs commented:

When I did experience it [the external mentoring support], I enjoyed it thoroughly... and I know for a fact that any new teachers, if they had that sort of consistent support, it would go a long way in retaining them. – *Wave 2 ECT*

On a personal level I get on with my mentor. She is very professional and knowledgeable. I know I could call her whenever and try and arrange a visit... – *Wave 3 ECT*

In general, matching on skillset and subject specialism/key stage was felt to be beneficial (although this was not *always* seen as crucial and was dependent on the needs of the mentee). Some mentors and mentees felt that support was more effective if they were in the same department, whilst others felt it was easier to mentor someone, or be mentored by someone, from a different department.

## 6.8.2 Tailored support

During interviews conducted at the end of the programme, senior leaders, mentors and ECTs reported that tailoring mentoring to ECTs' needs had been very effective. Mentors and ECTs were in agreement that it was valuable to give ECTs a '*very individualised approach*' and '*the opportunity to work towards their own goals and to identify those*'. As one mentor commented:

I think that's key in terms of it can't be a one size fits all programme. It's got to be tailored towards each individual's teaching and I think that's one of the things we have done really well...we've been able to identify different strengths and areas for development in teachers and speak to them about where they want to go with their career. – *Wave 3 Mentor*

## 6.8.3 Timetables and protected time

While not all of those interviewed at end-point were in schools where mentoring sessions had been formally timetabled, those who were highlighted that this was important for facilitating the mentoring support. One mentor reported that having protected time meant that mentoring had been '*more settled*' and it had made it '*easy to communicate*'. Some mentors commented that having protected time and regular meetings was particularly important where the ECT and mentor might not otherwise interact. A minority of mentors, not already working with timetabled mentoring meetings, reported that this was something that they would like to do differently in future. As two mentors commented:

I think the formal works really well, because actually there is a sense of expectation that it is definitely going to happen...It works very well for me to kind of be able to remind myself of the correct responses, the kind of phrasing and body language and things before we go in so if it is a formal meeting I am much more effective at my job, whereas a chance meeting in a corridor is much more likely for me to say 'Well, why don't you try this?', which is not really the best way of doing things. So, for me, formal meetings were better. – *Wave 1 mentor*

My advice going forward would always be that there is a timetabled session, because then it just means that it is much more able to happen. – *Wave 3 mentor*

During end-point interviews, **many mentors and ECTs, and some senior leaders, highlighted the effectiveness of funding additional, dedicated non-contact time to**

**support the mentoring.** They reported that this time was crucial in creating capacity within schools and amongst staff to both deliver and participate in the mentoring. For the ECTs this meant that they were *'not sacrificing other areas within their timetable to do it'* and they were able to commit to the programme without compromising their daily responsibilities. One ECT commented that, due to the funded cover and release time, *'I didn't feel like it was putting pressure on me in any way. I saw it as something that was adding value'*. It also provided both ECTs and mentors with time to create an agenda and programme of activities, reflect on practice and identify target areas. As one ECT commented, *'there is something really positive about knowing that it's funded. It makes it more purposeful'*.

In one school, the senior leader reported that the funding had allowed the internal mentor to attend some subject leader training alongside the ECT and noted that this had enabled them to reflect on and discuss the training together, which had been very positive:

So, by having the funding of sending two people together, they could actually use that as a developmental discussion as opposed to the early-career teacher coming back and feeding back to them. – Wave 3 senior leader

#### 6.8.4 A coaching focus

Several of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at the end of the programme reported that the coaching approach taken in their schools had worked well. They noted how this had encouraged ECTs to reflect on their practice, consider new ways of working and come up with their own solutions and, in doing so, build their resilience. One senior leader reported, *'he [external mentor] has taken more of a coaching approach than a mentoring approach to try to encourage them to unlock the answers to the questions themselves'*. Another senior leader noted, *'through doing the coaching methodology they are starting to become analytical about 'are there things I can do differently, are there things I can share?''*. The value of this coaching approach as a *'sustainable model'*, which would enable the school *'to put structures in place that allow the type of work that we are doing to continue without the [financial] external support...'* was highlighted by a further senior leader.

At end-point, some senior leaders and ECTs noted the effectiveness of 'therapy-style' support in which ECTs were able to be honest about the challenges they were facing without the fear of being judged:

As early-career teachers it is difficult, so also having those opportunities for them to just open up and have the therapy-style sessions as well, which is so important actually to be honest, at any stage in your career. To be able to have those opportunities, just to talk and share without fear or recrimination that this is going to be



taken back somewhere. Actually, they could just open up and say 'this isn't working for me and this is an issue I have had this week'. - *Wave 1 senior leader*

### 6.8.5 What worked well in the provision of external mentoring?

At end-point, a number of senior leaders and ECTs reflected on the benefits of external mentoring. They reported that **external mentors' independence from the school had enabled frank and open discussions to take place**, which might not have occurred with a member of the school's staff. As two ECTs and a senior leader noted:

If it is internal [mentoring] there is that fear of you saying the wrong thing and you are always treading on eggshells unfortunately in some circumstances. At least with someone who is coming from the outside looking in, you are under the impression that they are a little bit more objective. – *Wave 2 ECT*

It was good, because I was able to be honest, which I actually value. I do not want to hoodwink my experiences in any way. So, I was very free with him [the mentor] and he was very honest. If I had certain challenges he would recommend how best to deal with them. – *Wave 2 ECT*

Another benefit of this 'out of school mentoring' is that sometimes somebody who is not part of the school fabric, for example the senior leader or the line manager, is able to pick up on some of the health and wellbeing issues that perhaps they wouldn't as readily share within their own line management structure. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

In addition, some senior leaders emphasised the advantage of external mentoring in bringing an **external perspective and a 'fresh pair of eyes'** to the discussions. As one senior leader commented:

Those that had external mentors said that they valued the fact that they were external, because it wasn't just talking about things in an echo chamber, because they kind of know what people think here. So, getting external opinions... They said that has been really positive. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Linked to this, some of the 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point reported the value of external mentoring in **highlighting that teaching can be a different experience**

**depending on the school context.** One ECT commented that having a more positive experience of teaching in their mentor's school encouraged them to stay in teaching:

It [the mentoring] happened at a time when I was questioning whether or not I should stay in teaching [at my school] and, because of his support I got more confident and I wanted to continue [but in another school]. – *Wave 2 ECT*

Senior leaders, ECTs and mentors also noted that the external mentoring, in particular, had provided ECTs with the **opportunity to visit other schools to observe and share good practice** which had been beneficial. As one senior leader commented, *'it is really good for early-career teachers to get out into other schools, just for the fact they can learn from them and they can talk to other members of staff in different schools and to pick up little hints and tips'*. More generally, mentors felt it was important that ECTs gained experience from a variety of staff with different approaches and teaching styles, *'I think it is important that people work with people that are very different and have different ways of doing things...'*

### 6.8.6 What worked well with internal mentoring?

The value of internal mentoring arrangements was also reported. At end-point, ECTs who had a mentor from within their own school or Trust reported that this was beneficial as the mentor understood the school's demographics, working environment, systems and processes, *'they [mentor] understand the context we are working in...they understand the teaching context and the working environment'*. Another ECT commented:

It is useful for them to be in school, because at least then they know the situation within school, they know the staffing, the workload, they understand your situation and what you are working in, which is very useful. If it was an external mentor who was working in the region...then I'm not quite sure how they would help deal with certain challenges. – *Wave 1 ECT*

In addition, arranging meet ups was considered to be easier with internal mentors, as schedules were better understood and logistically it provided more flexibility to rearrange meetings at short notice, for example.

It appeared, therefore, that **there were advantages to both internal and external mentoring** and the decision about which to select depended on a number of factors including: internal school capacity; the individual needs of the mentee; and the culture of the school or relevant department where mentoring was to take place.

## 6.9 What worked less well in the provision of mentoring?

Some ECTs and mentors reported that they faced challenges with both internal and external mentoring such as: fitting the mentoring in around other commitments when weekly or regular time was not dedicated to it and not being well matched.

Five of the 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point had not received the mentoring support that was planned when they were interviewed at baseline. This meant that what they had hoped to achieve had not always come to fruition. The key reasons they gave for this were a lack of time and unsuccessful matching. Further details on these and other challenges reported by ECTs at end-point are provided below.

### 6.9.1 Lack of time

Having sufficient time to carry out their role was the most common challenge reported by mentors, particularly external mentors who were mentoring several ECTs. As one external mentor commented, '*I think it is really getting the heads in both schools [within the academy] to buy in to the fact that time is the precious commodity*'. A few mentors also reported not having the same non-contact time as their mentee making setting up meetings challenging. As mentioned above, a small number of ECTs reported that a lack of time resulted in their aims for mentoring (for example, developing skills in leadership or being able to progress into new roles such as SEN coordinator) not being met.

### 6.9.2 Unsuccessful matching

In most cases, ECTs had been allocated a mentor by senior leaders and some commented that they would have liked to have had some involvement in the matching decision, for example to ensure the mentor had experience of teaching the same subject or key stage if that was considered important, or was located at a different school if they preferred an external mentor. In most cases, ECT interviewees were allocated a mentor working in the same subject/key stage and phase. However, when they were not, they generally found the mentoring less effective. As this ECT commented:

I think it's really difficult to give advice on subject or classes if it is within a different subject. – *Wave 3 ECT*

A further ECT was allocated a mentor who had no experience of teaching Key Stage 5, which they wanted to develop. They felt that they had been mismatched and their needs had not been met. This type of unsuccessful match is illustrated in Example E below.

### Example E: Unsuccessful matching

At baseline, this ECT was teaching English in a secondary academy in an urban area in the south of England. He had been teaching for three years, all of which had been at his current school. Through the TSP, he received mentoring from a KS1 teacher in a primary school within the same MAT. He hoped the mentoring would provide an opportunity for reflection on practice, and guidance on how to progress into a pastoral role. However, in the initial interview, he felt that meetings had not been worthwhile due to the mentor's lack of contextual knowledge of secondary school teaching. When interviewed at the end of the programme, he said the mentoring had not improved. He commented, *'It's far, far less helpful than it would have been if I'd been working with other people in secondary'*. This did, however, appear to be an issue with how the MAT had implemented the programme, rather than with the TSP. The ECT felt that the hub days, which involved mentoring meetings and CPD, had been much more useful for the primary participants. This meant that involvement in the programme had not had an impact on this teacher's likelihood to remain in the profession, *'The TSP has given me more tools to use in the classroom, but has not increased my chances of staying [in teaching]'*. He stated that workload was the biggest factor in this decision.

### 6.9.3 Specific challenges with internal mentoring

Reflecting on their mentoring experiences during end-point interviews, some ECTs reported that they would have preferred an external mentor. They explained that this was because they did not feel comfortable discussing some frustrations and challenges related to, for example, school leadership, when their mentor was in their school or department. For example, as one ECT commented, *'some of the frustrations and things that I find challenging are related to school leadership, so with an internal mentor I wouldn't feel so comfortable discussing these things'*. Other ECTs reported having a mentor who was their line manager or who worked within the same faculty, which they did not find helpful. However, one ECT suggested that having a mentor from another school within their Trust would work well as they could still offer an 'external' perspective. Where this approach was taken, it was reported to be effective.

At end-point, only a small number of senior leaders identified challenges with the internal mentoring, such as increased workload for the mentors. Some suggested that a structured mentoring training programme, or a list of mentor training providers, could be provided so that schools did not have to source their own training for internal mentors.

#### 6.9.4 Specific challenges with external mentoring

During end-point interviews, a minority of senior leaders and ECTs described their perceptions of specific challenges associated with external mentoring. These included: poor communication between mentors and mentees; for some, the distance between the ECT's and the mentor's schools; poor matching, including ECTs thinking their mentor did not have the necessary skills; the impact on pupils of ECTs being out of class for long periods of time and being replaced by supply teachers; mentors being too busy; and the time taken to set up the mentoring. Although concerns around ECTs being out of the classroom and finding suitable supply cover were reported in relation to both types of mentoring (see section 10.2), these could be more significant for external mentoring due to a larger number of external visits.

In some cases, the capacity of senior leaders to 'follow things up' (i.e. resolve any issues with the external mentoring) had been a challenge. This was sometimes related to capacity issues resulting from a change in school leadership. One senior leader suggested that a set of standards for external mentors to work to may have been useful.

In one school, the external mentoring had been less successful as a result of the ECTs being matched with mentors who, despite being strong practitioners, were not able to offer skills or experiences that related directly to the ECTs' next steps. The degree of difference between the two schools' contexts and the travel time between them also limited impacts.

For one ECT, the external mentoring consisted of just one meeting and they did not know why subsequent sessions had not materialised. Another ECT found the external mentoring largely unhelpful as the mentor was located an hour away, which meant observations were difficult to arrange. A third ECT, although appreciative of her mentor's professionalism and knowledge, found meetings difficult to arrange due to how busy the mentor was.

## 7. Early-career support (CPD and non-contact time)

This section describes how early-career support for ECTs was delivered and what worked well and less well. It draws on the baseline teacher survey as well as qualitative data collected throughout the programme, which included interviews with a total of 55 senior leaders, 51 ECTs and 27 mentors. Baseline data is drawn from interviews with 50 senior leaders, 51 ECTs and 25 mentors. End-point data is drawn from interviews with 32 senior leaders, 15 ECTs and 11 mentors.

### 7.1 What additional non-contact time was provided to ECTs and how was it used?

Two-fifths of ECTs taking part in the baseline teacher survey reported that they had been provided with additional non-contact time to support their engagement in the programme. However, at this early stage, it could be that, for some, non-contact time was still to be organised, as a quarter were still unsure of the arrangement (see Figure 24 in the technical appendix). More positively, the majority of the 32 senior leaders and 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point reported that ECTs involved in the programme had been given additional non-contact time. However, in interviews with ECTs, it was sometimes difficult to establish whether all of the non-contact time mentioned was *additional* time funded via the TSP and if it included time for mentoring.

The end-point interviews revealed that the structure and regularity of the additional non-contact time varied across settings. In some schools, regular timetabled release times were scheduled, for example, on a weekly, fortnightly or half termly basis and, within this, the amount of time varied. Examples of time allocated included: between an hour and a day a week; between half a day to two days a fortnight; one day every half term; five lessons a term; three two hour slots over the year; and an additional five to ten per cent off timetable on top of PPA time. Some schools had adopted a more flexible approach, for example allocating a set number of non-contact days across a term or year, which could be used 'as and when'. In one wave 3 school, an ECT said they had been given a week off timetable at the end of the year, which they had mixed feelings about.

Senior leaders, mentors and ECTs provided information on how the additional non-contact time had been used. **Mentors and ECTs had used the time for coaching and mentoring conversations** and to discuss and review progress towards targets.

The time had also been used for ECT development activities. This included:

- mentors providing **in-class support** through lesson observations and feedback

- ECTs and mentors **visiting other classrooms and/or settings together** to observe good practice
- **ECTs shadowing subject leaders**
- **ECTs accessing, reflecting on and embedding learning from CPD**, with the aim of developing their teaching practice and/or subject leadership skills.

The use of the non-contact time to support ECTs' personal development was outlined by this senior leader:

During that time they may have gone and spent time with other subject leaders, they may have gone on training that is specific to them and then they are using that additional time to implement changes. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

ECTs also used the additional non-contact time to carry out some of the ongoing requirements of their teaching or leadership role, sometimes with the support of their mentor. This included: lesson planning and developing resources; marking, assessment and setting homework; curriculum development; fulfilling/developing subject leadership roles; research (for example, about a subject or examination marking schemes); and understanding a new school policy or strategy. As one ECT reported:

I used it last term to support my subject leadership. This term I've used it to help myself with assessment. I can choose what I use the time for. – *Wave 1 ECT*

Senior leaders and ECTs also noted that the time had been used to deal with day-to-day issues and to enable ECTs to 'catch up' and to 'get things back in order', particularly before or following busy periods.

## 7.2 What CPD was provided to ECTs and mentors?

### 7.2.1. CPD for ECTs

The baseline teacher survey data revealed that, at that early stage, over two-fifths of ECTs had been provided with additional funding to attend CPD (see Figure 24 in the technical appendix). This proportion is likely to have increased as ECTs became more involved in the programme. This is borne out by the fact that **the majority of the 15 ECTs who were interviewed at end-point reported that they had received CPD through the TSP**. Likewise, the majority of senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that their ECTs had received an additional or enhanced CPD entitlement through the programme.

Most ECTs reported that the **CPD funded via the TSP was ‘very specific and very tailored’** to their needs, role or interests, with the overarching aim being to enhance subject knowledge, classroom practice or improve subject leadership knowledge, skills and expertise. Some ECTs had been asked to complete a questionnaire, which asked about their development needs, or to talk to the system leader about their expectations. These ECTs’ comments were typical of others:

If I need something, I’d go and ask and it’s provided as soon as possible. – *Wave 1 ECT*

We have been allocated £1000 outside of our own CPD budget for anything, whether it be resources or books to relieve the workload, or training courses. They have been sending me on a lot of courses lately. – *Wave 1 ECT*

In some cases, senior leaders noted that school needs and priorities had also been considered in identifying CPD:

They have found things and said ‘Can we go on [this]? Are we able to do this?’ so it meets their need, but also I have seen things as well and either I have chosen it, because it is a need or a weakness of their teaching or whatever, or it is something that is going to extend their subject knowledge. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

The focus of CPD that ECTs completed included:

- subject knowledge development, including subject knowledge enhancement courses
- classroom practice and pedagogy, including how to make lessons more engaging or challenging
- subject leadership
- general leadership, including undertaking the NPQML, NPQSL and Developing Leadership Programme
- outstanding teaching, including taking part in the Outstanding Teaching Programme, Chartered Teaching Programme and Mosely Teacher Programme
- giving feedback to students
- being a SENCO (e.g. working towards the National SENCO Award) and training on dyslexia
- safeguarding
- behaviour management
- raising student aspirations
- workload



- syllabus content
- exam preparation
- assessment/assessment for learning
- undertaking Masters modules and degrees.

**On the whole, the CPD that ECTs received was externally delivered**, although CPD delivered in-house was also provided. There were some examples of CPD being provided by the Trust. In one case, for example, the Trust had organised a conference for ECTs, which included talks by the CEO on dealing with difficult people and leadership styles. In another case, TSP funding had been used to fund travel costs so that teachers could attend CPD events provided by the Trust. In a small number of schools, senior leaders had bought in external support, for example, from a Lead Practitioner or subject specialist as part of the CPD offer and, in one school, all ECTs were being enrolled on an Outstanding Teacher Programme.

During end-point interviews, around a third of senior leaders and most ECTs reported that the CPD had included the **opportunity to visit other schools to observe and share good practice**, which was viewed as a valuable professional development strategy. As a senior leader said, *'a lot of the CPD also has been opportunities for them [the ECTs] to go out to other schools and visit and look at other settings'*.

Some senior leaders also reported that ECTs had been given **opportunities to develop their role as subject leaders** through, for example, attending subject leader meetings, moderation meetings, conferences and taking advantage of networking opportunities. Further examples of the CPD undertaken by ECTs are provided in Appendix 2. An example of how a school was using the CPD funding for ECTs can be found in Example F below.

### Example F: CPD for ECTs

In one primary maintained school, the headteacher said she received £1,000 for CPD for each ECT involved in the TSP. Although the school already had a culture of CPD, the TSP had enabled the headteacher to send ECTs on *'a few more courses than I probably otherwise would have'*. ECTs had participated in a range of CPD tailored to their own needs. One ECT commented, *'it's been tailored and really supportive'*. For example, one had attended an Inspiring Change course about how to teach *'difficult and vulnerable children'*, which she said was *'really useful, it's led to a really big change in the way the students are responding'*. Another ECT explained, *'I've been to writing moderation meetings, I've been to some reading training, and I've recently become an SLE so, for that, there were training days'*.

The school also used the CPD funding to pay for ECTs to visit other schools to observe teaching practice. One ECT said, *'I think the opportunity to get out and about and see what other people do is positive'*.

The headteacher said that the programme had a wider impact on other staff, as some courses had offered a 'two for one' deal, meaning teaching assistants (TAs) had also participated and benefited. ECTs who had been on courses had also cascaded what they had learnt to other staff.

### 7.2.2 CPD for mentors

**A third of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that CPD had been provided for their internal mentors.** This included mentoring and/or coaching from the system leader as well as training, some of which was delivered by the system leader and some via an external leadership coach or coaching course. Several leaders reported that they had opted for the mentoring training to take more of a coaching focus, which was considered a more sustainable approach. As one senior leader said:

The aim is that by the end of the year they [mentors] are going to be coaching those people and not mentoring, because if you mentor them, that isn't sustainable. So we have to move, after Easter, from this more or less asking them questions and then advising them...to then reflecting on 'where did it go wrong and what do you think a range of solutions would be?' to then saying, 'so which of those do you think is the best?'...So that when those RQTs [recently-qualified teachers] go into their next year of teaching they are more reflective, because they have been coached and not mentored. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

In a small number of schools, senior leaders reported that mentors had been able to access CPD as part of other senior leadership programmes including the SLE, NPQSL and Lead Practitioner programmes. Example G below provides an example of CPD for mentors.

### **Example G: CPD for mentors**

In one Trust, senior leaders were keen to move from a mentoring to a coaching support model. To facilitate this, a leadership consultant was brought in to deliver a programme of coaching training to the assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher. Much of the emphasis of the training was on 'live coaching' and, as part of this, CPD coaching sessions delivered by the senior leaders were recorded and then subsequently reviewed with the consultant to learn from the coaching that had taken place. In addition, the training included an opportunity for coaches to be coached themselves. This was also recorded to enable coaches to watch the session and discuss how it made them feel. This enabled the assistant and deputy headteachers to consider how it felt to be coached, so they were able to develop a better understanding of the coaching model from the perspective of the coach and coachee. The aim was to develop strong coaching practice with which the senior leaders could support others, *'to get them to answer the questions themselves and develop their own practice'*.

## **7.3 What worked well in the provision of early-career support?**

### **7.3.1 What worked well in the provision of non-contact time?**

Senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that the additional non-contact time had provided ECTs with **dedicated time for mentoring and/or CPD activities**, which was key to the success of the support. As one senior leader commented:

It allows them [the ECTs] to have time without stressing about 'oh I have got to mark books or I have got to be doing something else'. It was a properly dedicated time for the session. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

**Some senior leaders considered the provision of non-contact time to be the most successful element of the programme.** As one senior leader commented, *'the funding for the additional non-contact time has been the thing that has had the most positive impact...'* This was particularly the case where schools had been able to employ suitably-qualified staff to cover ECTs' lessons.

Likewise, during end-point interviews, **a number of ECTs reported the non-contact time to be the most valuable aspect of the TSP**, as these ECTs observed:

The additional time is really valuable and I'll be sad when it goes away, because it really does help you teach better and prepare better. No matter how experienced you are, there's only so much you can handle. Some more experienced teachers look exhausted, you never see them in the staff room, no-one helps them with their work-life balance. – *Wave 1 ECT*

Time is one of the most essential things - to reflect, research things to enable you to progress. This has been the most beneficial thing for me so far. – *Wave 3 ECT*

Many ECTs reported that the extra non-contact time had provided them with **time for reflection and for subject, leadership and career development**.

Example H illustrates how one ECT used the extra non-contact time to develop his maths-related curriculum knowledge and teaching skills.

### Example H: Benefits of additional non-contact time

Prior to taking part in the TSP, this ECT was teaching KS3 and KS4 maths in a secondary academy in an urban area in the north of England. He had been teaching for three years, all of which had been at his current school. Through the TSP, he received support from an internal mentor, additional non-contact time and CPD. He felt the additional time had been most beneficial for meeting his goal, which was to develop his skills to teach maths at A-level. He hoped this would fulfill a personal desire, as well as benefit the maths department through increased teaching capacity. The additional one-hour a week off timetable allowed him to re-familiarise himself with the curriculum and content of A-level Maths. When his progress was revisited at the end of the programme, he commented, *'I feel that I'm in a position to teach A-level next year'* and said *'the time has been really valuable and I hope this continues'*. To further demonstrate how pivotal this additional time had been for preparing him to teach A-level, he favourably compared his TSP experience to an after-school A-level refresher course he had previously attended. He said:

There were about five or six of us who started it, but we all dropped out due to the time constraints. It was an extra hour on a Thursday and on top of the extra work that needs to be done, it just wasn't working, so the extra hour [through the TSP] has been fundamental to me being able to do this.

This ECT planned to remain in teaching, but felt this would depend upon the opportunities both in teaching A-level Maths and in progressing into leadership roles.

Some ECTs also found it useful to have the **extra time to help with their work-life balance** and to enable them to do their job more effectively. As one ECT commented:

If you have a meeting before school, a full day then a meeting after school, it's 4.30pm before you start planning for your next day. By that stage, mentally, it can drain you. In that state, not being able to plan good quality lessons or even remember everything you need to do can be a burden, so the extra time is very useful. – *Wave 1 ECT*

Senior leaders reported that the **flexible approach** taken in relation to non-contact time had worked well. This included the range of activities that the time could be used for, as well as the flexibility given to ECTs in how they managed the time and when they used it. In one example, the senior leader reported that the ECTs had *'self-managed that [additional time], we didn't put a restriction on it'* and went on to note:

I think initially they [the ECTs] thought they had to use it for subject leadership, but very quickly we said 'no, if you want to use it for subject leadership do, but it is really about your work-life balance and

so you spend that time how it best fits for you. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

Another senior leader reported that ECTs did not want to be out of the classroom at key points in the academic year - for example when they were preparing students for exams. This school had, therefore, offered the additional time as a 'block of days' which could subsequently be taken by the ECTs in line with their own commitments.

There were several **examples of schools and Trusts employing a cover supervisor to facilitate ECTs' access to TSP support**. For example, one senior leader, who had anticipated covering ECTs' lessons as a potential challenge, had used TSP funding to appoint someone with experience of the school on a part-time contract to cover the additional non-contact time being provided. They noted, '*because of our difficulties with retention and recruitment I needed somebody that I knew I could just say 'right, that Year 4 class, this is what they need' and that they get high quality learning out of them*'.

### 7.3.2 What worked well in the provision of CPD?

**When interviewed at end-point, some ECTs considered CPD to be the most worthwhile aspect of the programme.** This was due to it providing them with the time to: reflect on their teaching outside of the school environment; consider their future progression options; and make useful contacts with teachers at other schools. As one ECT commented:

It is important that the positive impact of the [CPD] programme is recognised. As an initiative, it will make a big difference. It has given staff the chance to think about progression, I have been lucky to just catch the course and [I am] grateful to be involved. – *Wave 3 ECT*

A number of senior leaders and ECTs pointed to the **bespoke nature of the CPD as a beneficial factor**. This had enabled the ECTs to work on individual development priorities and areas of interest. As one senior leader commented:

We have made it very bespoke for each of our teachers so they have then met with their mentors and looked at an action plan and then they receive very specific CPD opportunities according to what they want to do. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Several senior leaders and ECTs referred to the **opportunity for ECTs to visit other settings** as a key element of the CPD provision that had worked well. As one ECT commented:

From the CPD I've had, I've been able to observe other teachers who have been recognised by the assistant headteacher as members of staff who are really good at questioning. If I'm able to identify something we've discussed in CPD in other teachers' practices, I'm more likely to see that as something that makes more sense...it reinforces what I am doing. – *Wave 1 ECT*

**Most ECTs reported that external CPD was more impactful than CPD delivered internally.** As one ECT explained:

The course [TSP] has provided me with more opportunities to get CPD from external providers rather than just stuff internally, which I didn't find useful previously. – *Wave 3 ECT*

However, **internal CPD was also valued if it was perceived to be relevant, focused and of sufficient depth.** One ECT, who had received both external and internal CPD, described the impact of the internal training he had attended, which comprised six sessions led by the assistant headteacher and a lead practitioner. The CPD focused on questioning, modelling, classroom practice, visits to other classes and talking through a range of strategies to be implemented in lessons. The ECT described the programme as '*very useful*' as it helped him to reflect and develop effective questioning techniques for those students who do not know the answer right away.

Several senior leaders and a small number of ECTs highlighted that **the funding available through the programme had been a significant enabling factor in relation to the CPD provision and its impact.** As one senior leader noted:

I could not have afforded to do it. Without getting too political, that is the problem at the moment. Because of the state of the funding, without this money that I knew I could put aside for that [CPD] and that is what it was for and it was in addition to anything else, I simply couldn't have justified doing [it with] that number of staff to get us in to the [advantageous] position that we are now in. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

#### **7.4 What worked less well in the provision of early-career support?**

During end-point interviews, **some ECTs reported that the CPD they had received was too generic** and not useful. They reported that they would have preferred it to have been more tailored to their needs, which they felt would have been the case if they had been allowed more input into the design of their support package. One ECT, for example, had attended generic sessions on wellbeing, which had taken up her existing non-contact

time and had, therefore, added to her workload. Another ECT said, '*I was not involved in shaping [the CPD], it was all dictated*'. This suggests the importance of consulting with ECTs on their training and support needs and devising a programme which meets these, alongside any broader school needs.

There were also examples of **CPD being restricted by the timing of the funding** e.g. it was obtained too late for ECTs to start Masters modules or courses. As a senior leader in a case-study secondary academy commented, '*the problem was that by the time we'd secured the funding, the Masters programmes had already begun*'.

One senior leader noted that, due to the number of CPD opportunities being accessed as part of the TSP, **their school had needed to increase its use of supply teachers to cover ECTs' classes**. The senior leader reported that, on reflection, it would have been preferable to organise internal cover arrangements at the start of the programme, noting:

Some teachers felt that they were having supply teachers in their classes too often and we would rather, with hindsight, have had somebody employed to cover that internally so that it was a known face. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Linked to the points above, **a small number of ECTs reported the extra workload that taking time out of the classroom entailed** and, for this reason, short courses were preferred by some.



## 8. What impacts have been achieved?

This section describes the impacts of the support provided to senior leaders, ECTs and mentors. It draws on data from end-point interviews with 32 senior leaders, 15 ECTs and 11 mentors.

### 8.1 Perceptions of impact on schools and senior leaders

#### 8.1.1 Impact on school recruitment

**Around two-thirds of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that their experiences of recruitment had been positive in the last year.** The majority reported that recruitment had improved, noting an increase in the number and the quality of applicants. Where senior leaders were positive about recruitment, but did not report an improvement, this was because the school did not historically face challenges with recruitment, or had not needed to recruit. However, it is worth emphasising that over a third of senior leaders reported that recruitment continued to be challenging.

Where recruitment had improved, senior leaders linked this to an improvement in the school's profile, resulting from strong, stable leadership, raised standards, improved Ofsted grading and the enhanced opportunities available through the TSP. As one senior leader said, *'the reputation is improving, therefore, people want to come and work for us'*. Other senior leaders noted:

Part of our role was to bring in consistency and that brought a rise in standards and that has brought an improvement in our local reputation and that has brought more desire to be in our school. –  
*Wave 3 senior leader*

In terms of choosing our school, one of the things we were able to 'sell' if you like was the involvement in the programme and their [the applicants'] continued support and coaching as a result of the funding available and the CPD. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

However, **a number of senior leaders reported that recruitment into shortage subjects such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and modern foreign languages (MFL) continued to be challenging.**

Some senior leaders reported that they had introduced new recruitment strategies whilst, in other schools, the TSP had supported a further focus on, or development of, strategies that were already being used.

**Many schools already had existing links with teacher training providers**, including teaching schools and universities. However, senior leaders in some of these schools said that, as a result of the TSP, they had **established further links, or become more proactive in developing existing links**, with the aim of recruiting trainees, particularly into shortage subjects. Examples of this included: sitting on university and teaching school committees; attending university recruitment fairs; and providing universities with application packs for upcoming positions. As one senior leader noted:

We are doing as much work [as we can], with all of our partnerships with teacher training, just to be 'out there' as much as possible. -  
*Wave 3 senior leader*

Some schools who were not using this strategy previously had **established new links with teacher training providers to offer student placements**. Often, this had been made possible due to increased staff capacity resulting from the TSP:

We didn't [previously] have the staff capacity to mentor teacher trainees. We have that now at both [schools] so, yes, it [the TSP] will have influenced our strategies in getting people in and growing our own. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

So [name of ECT] who was part of it [the TSP] last year, but not this year, who was mentored heavily and coached heavily last year, she is going to be the mentor for the students...So, it is that retention, but then also that capacity building. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Again, many schools were using a **'grow your own' approach** prior to their involvement in the TSP, but there were several examples of steps schools had taken during the programme to facilitate this further (as illustrated in Example I below). In one school, senior leaders had applied to provide school-based teacher training to overcome some of the recruitment challenges they faced. In others, senior leaders had further developed their systems to enable support staff and unqualified teachers to gain qualified teacher status. For example, one school had used the funding and support available through the TSP to set up a pre-SCITT programme with some other local schools. The programme involved offering a year's additional training and classroom experience to teaching assistants to enable them to make an informed decision to enrol on a SCITT programme the following year.

Other senior leaders reported that, during the course of the programme, they had enrolled staff on subject knowledge enhancement courses to enable them to teach other subjects, had introduced apprenticeship training schemes or enrolled staff on assessment only routes into teaching. This was enabling unqualified teachers and suitably qualified teaching assistants to gain qualified teacher status.

**Example I: Seeking opportunities to ‘grow your own’.**

As a result of ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, this primary school had historically experienced significant teacher shortages. However, following an innovative ‘grow your own’ recruitment strategy, the school has been able to build a complete staffing profile. To achieve this, the school embarked on a programme of upskilling existing staff through an apprenticeship scheme with a partner university. In addition, as part of the package of training, where staff had degrees and qualifications that had been issued in other countries, the school became a GCSE centre to enable these staff to gain the required equivalent GCSE qualifications needed to achieve qualified teacher status.

To support and complement this arrangement, the school also ensured that all staff appointed received dedicated mentoring or coaching support and a guaranteed CPD entitlement as part of their career development pathway. To facilitate this, a leadership coach was appointed to deliver leadership coaching training to the school’s senior leadership team, enabling them to effectively support teachers across the school.

Hiring trainee teachers through Teach First was another strategy that many schools reported they were using prior to their involvement in the TSP. However, in a small number of schools, **links with Teach First** were established during their involvement in the TSP whilst, in others, senior leaders reported that they had further developed existing links. Some senior leaders highlighted their school’s enhanced capacity to accept Teach First graduates since the start of the programme. The impact of this on filling vacant positions in core shortage subjects was noted, particularly for secondary schools:

We have found that going through Teach First has made a big difference and that is really how we have been able to recruit into the core subjects...But that is because we have been building that relationship with them over the last couple of years and that has come to a point where our support for graduates has been recognised and I think that trust between the Academy and Teach First is very positive right now. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Although a small number of schools already **recruited from abroad**, there were examples of schools in the early stages of embarking on this strategy as a result of the

TSP. One senior leader outlined the rigorous recruitment process this entailed and the importance of providing clear and detailed information about the school and local area. In addition, a well thought out and comprehensive support package for arriving teachers was considered key. This included the opportunity for overseas teachers to ‘team teach’ for half a term to enable them to become familiar with the curriculum and the school’s policies and procedures:

We have our teachers teaching and our new overseas teachers are not put alone in the classroom for half a term. That costs an arm and a leg, but they go into the class that they are going to take over and they learn the ropes. They learn the English curriculum, they learn the daily routines, they learn our behaviour statement, they learn how we deal with our children, but in a way that they have good induction, good support. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Several senior leaders reported that they had **developed their recruitment package as a result of system leader support**. A number reported changing recruitment literature in order to better ‘sell’ their school and increase its appeal to potential candidates. Changes included re-wording advertisements, reviewing the school prospectus, devising a candidate information pack and improving the school’s website. As one senior leader noted, ‘*we want to get more of a distinctive package of what you get when you come and work for us...just what it is like to be a teacher in our school*’. Another commented:

We are trying to sell ourselves much more through the literature, so not only the advert, but the literature that we send alongside the advert...emphasising the support that they [potential applicants] will receive and also celebrating the individuality of the school...so that people know what kind of school they are applying to. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Some senior leaders reported that they were taking **proactive steps to raise the profile of their schools locally**, such as attending local events and offering tours of the school.

There were also examples where new recruitment strategies were being introduced MAT-wide, meaning impact went beyond individual TSP schools.

A number of senior leaders reported that they were **promoting the changes they had made as a result of their involvement in the TSP to potential candidates**. Some made direct reference to the enhanced ECT support that was available, ‘*in terms of choosing our school, one of the things we were able to ‘sell’ if you like was the involvement in the programme and their continued support and coaching as a result of*

*the funding available and the CPD*'. Others publicised school-wide changes that they had made, such as a commitment to coaching and/or mentoring and tailored and ongoing CPD for all teachers and strategies to reduce workload and improve wellbeing. One senior leader in a Trust commented that the TSP funding had been used to provide coaching training for two teachers, which meant that everyone across the Trust now had access to an independent coach free of charge. This was highlighted to potential new recruits and was an example of Trust-wide impacts of the TSP.

As a result of TSP support, some senior leaders had taken steps to **advertise more widely** and a number had signed up to the DfE 'Teaching Vacancies' online recruitment tool. There was also evidence of **increased use of social media**. Senior leaders reported developing their use of LinkedIn and Twitter in order to 'get their name out there' and 'showcase' the school.

**Creating new posts** within the staffing structure or **adding pay incentives** to advertised posts were also recruitment strategies that were adopted by some senior leaders during their involvement in the programme. For example, one school had created a new, more senior post that included a teaching commitment to attract a greater number and higher calibre of applicants to a shortage subject. Other senior leaders had continued to offer TLRs, retention payments or negotiated salary uplifts as part of the advertised role. Senior leaders also referred to employee benefits available through the school or academy, including wellbeing initiatives and discount schemes. The need to be creative in relation to pay structures was, however, identified as a concern for some senior leaders. As one senior leader noted, *'I think teachers know there is a problem and so they are calling the shots and they'll knock on our doors and say 'can you pay me more?''*

When asked about any future recruitment strategies, two-thirds of senior leaders said that they were not considering any new strategies because they now had a range of effective strategies in place. Strategies reported by the remaining senior leaders mirrored those that were being used already in their and other schools.

### **8.1.2 Impact on school retention**

**At end-point, almost all of the 32 senior leaders interviewed reported a more positive picture of retention in their school** and this did not always just include those staff involved in the TSP. Improved retention had often come about due to staff recognising that the school or Trust supported and valued its staff and provided opportunities for professional growth and career development. As one senior leader noted:

I think they [staff] feel valued and I think they feel that they have got a voice and they have autonomy to really become the teachers that

they want to become. So I think that, as a culture, means that people want to stay, because they feel that they are being developed. –  
*Wave 1 senior leader*

Moreover, the TSP had helped to raise some senior leaders' awareness of the importance of supporting the retention of ECTs, and this had been given a higher priority across some MATs, meaning the impact went beyond TSP schools. As one senior leader in a Trust commented:

Certainly being part of the Tailored Support Programme, without doubt, has raised our awareness of just how important it is to support the retention of those early-career teachers. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Another senior leader highlighted **the emerging retention impact of the programme on the school's NQTs** who, it was reported, could now see the support available to teachers in their second and third year of teaching, and noted, *'to have that sense [of value] amongst that group of staff can only be good for the morale of those people and will obviously feed in to the way our current NQTs are viewing their end of year'*.

Senior leaders reported a range of actions they had taken or enhanced to improve retention as a result of their participation in the TSP. These included: more supportive leadership and improved staff relationships; a further focus on teacher wellbeing and workload reduction; an improved CPD offer; and promotion and additional responsibilities.

Several senior leaders reported that they had increased their **focus on staff relationships** and, in particular, improved relationships between staff and senior leaders. As two senior leaders said, *'culture and ethos is really important. Trying to make sure we keep improving the culture and the senior team's working relationship with the staff'* and *'it will help our leaders and our mentors to be perhaps a little bit more outward facing around staff so that we can recruit and retain some really good people'*. One senior leader gave an example of an improved policy and procedure for dealing with behavioural issues, which provided more clarity regarding the support provided to teachers by senior leaders:

There is a very, very clear behaviour management policy and there is a very clear point where it stops being the teacher's problem and we [SLT] become involved...The leadership team come in and take the pressure off the teacher...so we don't get that added stress that I know drives teachers away from the job... – *Wave 2 senior leader*

Many schools focused on **teacher wellbeing and reducing workload** as a retention strategy prior to their involvement in the TSP. However, several reported prioritising these areas further. As one senior leader commented:

We had paid lip service to workload and we had put policies in place to reduce marking, but I don't think we had thought about it holistically or personalised it to an individual staff level before. –  
*Wave 3 senior leader*

New Trust-wide wellbeing strategies had been introduced in some cases. This included a 'Trust day', which entitled each member of staff to a day off during the academic year, which could be used as they wished, as well as a retail discount scheme that staff across the Trust could sign up to. Other examples included: employee assistance programmes; a wellbeing week with no meetings after school; and the opportunity for staff to take time off to attend their own children's events.

New workload reduction initiatives included the introduction of live marking, new reporting systems and marking schemes, shared planning opportunities and a reduction in data drop points and administrative tasks.

Several senior leaders reported that their schools' **improved CPD offer** was helping to retain staff. More details are provided in section 8.1.6 below.

Some senior leaders also reported that, since being involved in the TSP, they had **offered promotion or additional responsibilities** to retain staff. Some of these attracted a higher salary or TLRs. Alongside this, a number of senior leaders reported that they were having more open conversations with staff about talent, progression and retention. This included an example of a school where 'shadow teams' worked with the subject leads on tasks in preparation for progression:

We have been trying to do more work on shadow teams so people who don't have a paid responsibility for it, but who are part of the team, work with that lead on different things. The TSP has accelerated that. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

A number of senior leaders commented that **improved staff retention** had led to their schools being stable, which had led to **reduced staff absenteeism, better pupil behaviour and a calmer environment**, which, in turn, would continue to improve recruitment and retention moving forward:

When you are stable you attract more staff and when you are not you haemorrhage. The stabilising factor is the quality of education for

everybody and then it is more attractive for staff. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

So, because we have managed to keep the staff stable, the children are more stable so our behaviour is better and so it is a nicer environment to work in. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

There were also **examples of senior leaders who had themselves been encouraged to remain in teaching as a result of the system leader support**. As one senior leader commented:

She has been incredibly useful to me, maintained my sanity. There have been times...where I have thought about looking elsewhere for a job, because things have got really difficult and being able to talk to [name of system leader] about the difficulties, this was early on, when I had a very inexperienced staff and it was impossible to recruit and I had high numbers of SEN...actually having somebody there to see a way through the fog was really useful for me. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

When asked about potential new retention strategies, senior leaders' comments typically mirrored strategies already being used across schools, but most notably included a continued focus on CPD, mentoring and coaching and teacher wellbeing and workload. Facilitating opportunities for staff to take on additional responsibilities and career progression were also cited.

### 8.1.3 Development of new partnerships

At end-point, just over a third of senior leaders interviewed reported that **a new partnership had been established with their system leader's school** as a result of their involvement in the TSP. They noted that this had been extremely helpful and had enabled them to learn and develop from the partner school and share resources, '*we weren't expecting that sort of bond and partnership and it has really helped us in our leadership role*'. One senior leader reported that their school had now become part of the teaching school that their system leader led.

Several senior leaders reported that their **staff had accessed training at their system leader's school**. Examples included TSST and training related to early years provision. In many cases, a range of training was being accessed by different staff, as this senior leader pointed out:

It opened up a doorway for all of our staff to access some training, if needed, and it was basically wherever we wanted they [the system



leader's school] would do their best to try and help us out with what it was. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

A small number of senior leaders also said that, **as a result of their link with the system leader, new partnerships had developed with other schools, hubs, Trusts or networks**. These links had been either established or brokered by the system leader directly, or come about through association with the system leader. One senior leader, who had been linked via the system leader with another Trust noted:

That has been really beneficial from my perspective to know that I am doing it properly, because I have got another person to talk through how I have done it, but also we can set up some links with some schools and go and visit each other as well. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

**Partnerships had also developed with the external mentors' schools**. Senior leaders reported that this had generated a wider informal network, notably, *'expanding the network of schools that we can draw on for support and advice'*.

Some senior leaders reported other partnership impacts resulting from their involvement in the programme. One reported closer links between the primary and secondary schools within their own Trust, noting, *'we have started to think a little bit more as a community of schools as to how we can mutually support each other'*. Others noted new links with the Maths Excellence Hubs, the National Citizenship Programme and the National STEM Centre.

#### **8.1.4 School culture change**

During end-point interviews, senior leaders and mentors generally spoke positively of the TSP in terms of **contributing to an improved school culture**. As a result of the support they had received and the changes they had made, senior leaders hoped teachers would view their schools as places that cared about professional development and workload, and had a culture of learning and professional dialogue.

Several senior leaders noted that **a mentoring and coaching culture now underpinned their school's approach to staff development for all staff**, not just those in the early stages of their career. This was also mentioned by a number of mentors. As one senior leader reported:

We have gone from this coaching model, which was one-to-one and being very much bespoke towards those early-career teachers, to actually a whole school coaching model where people are coaching each other... – *Wave 1 senior leader*

In another example, one Trust had introduced a 'Teaching and Learning Hub' to share good practice and expertise, managed by the internal mentor.

Example J below provides an example of the development of a more supportive school culture.

### **Example J: A more supportive school culture**

As part of their drive to address retention challenges, a review of the current performance management and appraisal system was undertaken by this secondary school. This led to a move away from appraisal in its traditional sense to a model of 'Continuous Professional Growth'. As part of this, professional conversations moved away from being target driven and 'met or not met' to a focus on continuous reflection on practice, supported by a coaching conversation model.

Senior leaders and staff engaged in positive professional conversations which involved reflecting on the teacher standards, career aspirations and CPD needs. Action research and continuous learning then underpinned this teacher growth model enabling teachers to continually improve their classroom practice.

To support these conversations, the school took steps towards becoming a coaching organisation and was able to use TSP funding to enrol two members of staff on a regional coaching course. Through this, all staff were able to access an independent coach. The school is now well placed to be able to support and coach staff, including trainee teachers and those new to the profession and continues to grow and develop staff in this way.

## **8.1.5 Increased senior level capacity and expertise**

As a result of system leader support, many of the 32 **senior leaders interviewed at the end of the programme reported that they were now better able to support and develop staff, address workforce planning issues, and review recruitment and retention practices.**

The opportunity to discuss school priorities and issues with an experienced system leader was said to have been '*a gift*' and '*a tremendous development and leadership opportunity*'. It had **helped several senior leaders to effectively and more confidently tackle challenges**, with two senior leaders reporting:

It has been really helpful, just to sort of thrash ideas about and also to get a view on what other schools do and talk to another, an experienced head that knows and kind of understands the challenges of schools... – *Wave 1 senior leader*

It has been like a mentor for me or a coach. Someone there that I can just bounce ideas off. So it has definitely upskilled me and made me more confident in how to support staff in school. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Some senior leaders reported that the system leader support provided them with **reassurance and confidence to move forward plans**. As one senior leader noted, ‘*I was given the space and time with someone very experienced to sit back and say ‘you’re right, this is what needs to be put right for this school to be successful’*’. Likewise, another senior leader within a MAT said, ‘*because of the system leader [it] has meant that I am more secure in what I am doing, which means I can support the schools better and efficiently*’.

Some senior leaders also outlined the impact of the system leader support on their **ability to tackle more specific matters, some of which went beyond support for recruitment and retention**. This included restructuring, academy conversion, becoming a teaching school, building projects, curriculum development and preparing for/actioning the recommendations of Ofsted and SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspections.

Some senior leaders reported **the increased skills of other senior and middle leaders in schools**, for example through support from the system leader to achieve NPQSL.

### 8.1.6 Improved CPD offer

A number of the senior leaders interviewed at the end of the programme reported an improved CPD offer in their schools as a result of the TSP funding. They reported that the TSP had enabled them to **invest more strategically in both ECTs and more senior staff acting as mentors**, who were ‘*given opportunities to grow no matter what stage of their career they are at*’. Many hoped to continue with their improved offer, but funding was an issue for some – see section 9.1.

In particular, schools had provided ECTs with more CPD than they would otherwise have had. As one senior leader commented, ‘*it has enabled them [the ECTs] to have a wider CPD entitlement than perhaps I would have been able to do just through the normal budget*’. Other senior leaders highlighted the increased breadth of the CPD opportunities available to ECTs and how the TSP had supported them to change their CPD model:

Just being receptive to saying yes to particular CPD opportunities, whether it is a visit to another school, whether it is to go on a course, whether it is some subject specialist training. Equally fast tracking them into our NPQML programme, because they are aspiring middle

leaders and aspiring excellent colleagues who we want to retain. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

It forced us to think differently in terms of how we were going to utilise the money and how we were going to make sure that teachers developed. It forced us to really consider how we were doing our CPD model and how it could have wider impact. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Other senior leaders reported that **the TSP had increased the speed at which improvements in their schools' CPD offers had been made**. As one senior leader commented:

We simply couldn't have maintained the upward trend of progress and learning and attainment for the school without my deputy for that amount of time had these other members of staff not been given the extra training and the extra expertise that the programme has given them. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

### 8.1.7 Wider school improvement

In some cases, there was evidence of impact on wider school improvement.

Around a third of senior leaders interviewed at end-point, and a number of mentors, reported that **the CPD accessed through the programme had led to wider school improvement impacts, as a result of staff development and cascading of learning**. One senior leader commented:

I think for me, when we originally started to discuss the project I hadn't appreciated quite what the impact could be on school improvement, so how well it would support what we needed for school improvement and the capacity it would give us to develop those teachers to then develop that middle leadership role and that just happened quite naturally. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

Another senior leader outlined how projects that ECTs had introduced as part of qualifications they were undertaking had, '*cascaded and contributed to school improvement*'.

There were also **examples of learning from CPD funded via the TSP being cascaded across schools within a Trust**. For example, an 'in the moment planning' project that ECTs had undertaken had impacted the whole early

years team across a federation of schools. In another example, the CPD an ECT had attended had resulted in curriculum changes across a Trust.

Echoing similar comments made regarding their schools' CPD offers, some senior leaders also noted that system leader support and funding had **increased the speed with which school improvement had been realised:**

When you are looking at school improvement strategies there is so much that we have done, but the speed with which we have been able to go at has been really enhanced by this programme and being able to get in that additional teaching and learning support. - *Wave 1 senior leader*

...because of the funding from the programme, it means we can invest in this properly...Instead of this work being spread over the course of six years, we can do it in about two. It means we are very rapidly providing teachers with the skills and experiences they need to give them confidence to be more successful in the classroom. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

**Where external mentoring had improved ECTs' leadership potential, senior leaders reported wider benefits at whole school level.** For one senior leader, this had resulted in strong subject leader representation by ECTs during their Ofsted inspection:

So, for their [the ECTs] own professional development it has had a significant impact, but also for us as a school. The work that they [ECTs] have done has been invaluable. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

For others, **external mentoring had led to an improved curriculum** (such as the development of the maths, PSHE (personal, social and health education) and early years provision). As one senior leader commented:

...what they [ECTs] have done with our curriculum has been really important for us as a school and possibly we wouldn't have got to the position that we are in without some of the suggestions and work that came from [name of external mentor]. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

Other examples of wider school improvement included: the introduction of research-based learning, improved links between subject areas (e.g. PHSE and RE) and access to additional funding streams.

Example K below shows how one school's in-class CPD support led to wider school improvement.

### Example K: Supporting school improvement through CPD

In one Trust, where lead practitioners had been brought in to provide in-class CPD support, the senior leader highlighted the benefit of this for wider school improvement. They noted that it had enabled senior leaders to discuss their whole school priorities through strategic discussions with the lead practitioners who could then share, introduce and review these at an operational level. As the senior leader noted, *'it just allowed us to really focus on what might make the difference, engage teachers in the conversation, and have them practice, apply, model and then embed'*. In addition, the ECTs receiving support were then able to share this with colleagues, leading to wider school impact and ultimately, *'a substantial shift in the quality of education provided for our children'*.

## 8.2 Perceptions of impact on ECTs

During baseline interviews, senior leaders reported a number of ways in which they were measuring the impact of the programme on the ECTs involved. These included: informal meetings/discussion, lesson observations and book reviews, and measuring outcomes against agreed targets/activities such as retention rates, ECTs' willingness to take on more responsibility and uptake of CPD.

At end-point, senior leaders and ECTs were asked about their perceptions of the impact of the mentoring (internal and external) and CPD delivered as part of the TSP, as well as the additional non-contact time ECTs had been allocated. They reported a range of impacts, which are detailed below.

### 8.2.1 Improved knowledge and practice

Senior leaders and mentors commonly reported that **mentoring had resulted in ECTs' improved subject/key stage knowledge and teaching practice**. Several senior leaders and mentors focused on their ECTs' improved behaviour management techniques. As one mentor reported, *'she is challenging low level disruption a lot more. It [the observations and support] has really given her that confidence to be able to challenge that and you can see the progress'*. Other interviewees focused on improvements in ECTs' subject knowledge. For example, one mentor reported that her ECT's development was *'subject knowledge-wise and how to deliver that effectively to children to maximise their progress'*. Another mentor reported their ECT's development of a new progress tracking system, which enabled them to see each child's weaknesses at a glance. Other mentors and senior leaders reported ECTs' improved self-reflection and workload management.

Senior leaders and mentors also reported that **mentoring had developed ECTs' leadership knowledge and skills, and this was most often attributed to external mentoring**. For example, one mentor believed her ECT had '*...probably made the most progress in terms of her leadership style. She is far more assertive, she is confident, she is proactive, incredibly organised*'. Improvements in leadership included leading subjects, year groups or curriculum projects. Aspects of leadership that were reported to have been developed through mentoring included: working with and managing other staff; inputting at staff meetings and in-service training (INSET); undertaking subject audits and reviews; and influencing the behaviour of other staff.

Regarding ECTs' own reports, of the 15 ECTs interviewed both at the beginning and end of their involvement in the TSP, **most felt the mentoring had met their aims in terms of improving their teaching and/or leadership practice**. For example, one ECT commented, '*it's definitely improved my planning, which was something I really wanted it to do, I think it made me a little bit faster and more efficient*'. Another felt the mentoring had met their aim of improving pupil engagement:

I feel like my teaching has improved, but also I've got a broader range of pupil response and every child is included...I do think it helped my lowest 20 per cent engage more in lessons. – *Wave 3 ECT*

A number of ECTs particularly focused on the **insights and ideas gained from lesson observations and school visits**, which were often linked to mentoring. For example, as one ECT commented, '*I found it really useful to go to another school and do some casual observations...gaining ideas and seeing what they do, discussing this with the teachers afterwards*'.

**Many of the impacts of the TSP CPD reported by senior leaders and ECTs mirrored those of the mentoring support**, detailed above. Senior leaders most commonly reported that **CPD had led to improvements in confidence, subject knowledge, teaching practice and subject leadership**:

...it just adds to the skills that they have with them...They can say I have got this training and I have attended this course and this is what I have done with it. And confidence wise it has been massive for them. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

I think the biggest thing is improved subject knowledge, which has had an impact on their improved teaching capability, which ultimately has an impact on outcomes for pupils. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Similarly, **most ECTs interviewed before and after receiving CPD felt it had met their aims** of supporting them with teaching and/or subject leadership, assessment and improving pupil progress. A minority of ECTs reported that CPD undertaken through the programme had enabled them to develop a new teaching specialism, as illustrated in Example L below.

#### **Example L: Developing a new specialism**

At baseline, this ECT was teaching English in a secondary academy in an urban area in the south of England. She had been teaching for three years, all of which had been at her current school. During her initial interview, she said she wanted to attend training in dyslexia, to enable her to become a specialist. This would allow her to assess pupils who were showing signs of this learning difficulty. She also commented that, due to many of her students having SEN, engagement with the CPD would enable her to better support pupils in general. The TSP funded the training, which she reported was *'helping me understand the issues students are having and come up with different strategies that might help them...even for students who aren't dyslexic'*. Engagement in the CPD had not only supported her to become a specialist in dyslexia, but it had also allowed her to tailor her teaching practice to support a broader range of pupils. This ECT had no intention of leaving the profession, and the support provided by the TSP had supported that decision, *'there have been times where it is a tough job and you do consider leaving like everyone does, so it's been helpful having the support there'*.

Some ECTs were unable to separate the impacts of mentoring, CPD and additional non-contact time. Combined, they reported impacts on subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, skills in motivating pupils and managing pupil behaviour, marking, time management, planning and organisation. Additional non-contact time was noted for providing the time for ECTs to reflect on what they had learnt and embed new strategies in their practice. Example M below illustrates the various impacts the TSP has had on ECTs' teaching and leadership practice.



### Example M: Impact on ECTs' practice

This primary academy had three ECTs taking part in the TSP. The ECTs identified different areas of their practice they wanted to improve. All three ECTs shared an external mentor, had a timetable reduction of ten per cent and were accessing the additional CPD fund of £1,000 available via the programme.

Due to the challenging nature of their class, one ECT wanted to focus on behaviour management. They spent time in their mentor's school observing lessons and having focussed discussions in this area. As a result, they now *'have lots of different strategies to use and build on'*. This ECT said, *'it's really given me the chance to reflect on my own practice, get advice from someone a lot more experienced...it's been a lot more tailored...and it has shown a massive improvement in the classroom'*. Another ECT focused on improving their teaching and learning and gained new ideas from lesson observations in the mentor's school and from CPD courses. They fed back what they had learnt to other staff, which resulted in a positive impact on the whole school. The third ECT was working in a middle leadership capacity and used their extra time to work on their leadership skills, for example by working on observing teachers and providing feedback. They gained new ideas from school visits and said the programme had given them *'the opportunity to become an SLE, which is definitely beneficial'*.

ECTs and senior leaders expected that, in the longer-term, **positive impact would be seen on student outcomes and ECTs' preparedness for, and progression into, leadership roles**. For some ECTs, there was evidence that these impacts had already been achieved.

### 8.2.2 Improved wellbeing, motivation and morale

Senior leaders, mentors and ECTs interviewed at end-point often reported **improvements in the wellbeing and morale of ECTs taking part in the TSP**. Some ECTs reported that they were happier, more resilient and had a more positive attitude towards teaching as a result of participation in the TSP. Others reported that it had been effective in helping with reducing their workload, creating a better work-life balance and relieving pressure and stress.

**Feeling supported and valued was identified as one of the main impacts of the *internal and external mentoring***. In some cases, senior leaders attributed this to the opportunity to be mentored per se and, in others, leaders linked this to the opportunity to discuss CPD opportunities and career development, noting, *'they can see that they have got a pathway to go within school'*. As a senior leader and an ECT commented:

They [ECTs] are saying that they feel supported, that they feel valued and, critically, they don't feel judged. They feel as though we are a team and, therefore, they can get things wrong and they won't have someone humiliating them or embarrassing them. They will be able to learn from that and move on from it. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Knowing that you do have a mentor, someone to talk to, someone to go to, someone to guide you, is a good feeling. – *Wave 1 ECT*

Several senior leaders also noted that **staff felt more motivated and valued as a result of the CPD they were accessing:**

It comes back to the business of knowing that they feel valued, because they are having this additional CPD, they are having the opportunities to learn new skills or enhance skills that they had already touched upon, but didn't feel confident with. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Many ECTs were also appreciative of CPD funding that they had received, for example towards Masters modules and programmes and NPQs. These opportunities were very motivational for ECTs, who reported that they had supported them to develop skills and knowledge in areas that interested them, and which were important for their career progression and their school.

Senior leaders noted the **positive impact of the additional non-contact time on ECTs' workload and work-life balance.** It had improved wellbeing through '*lessening the load*' and giving ECTs '*breathing space*' to meet the expectations of their teaching and subject and middle leadership roles. As one senior leader commented:

My history lead...she is a Year 2 teacher and so has a big workload anyway, so just to be given the time to go and look at her subject within the school [day] rather than after school or in her own PPA time was obviously really supportive. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

One senior leader emphasised that **additional non-contact time was particularly beneficial for ECTs who were relatively new to the profession,** noting:

...things still have to be done, but when you are a newer teacher everything takes longer because you are not as good at it, you have not done it before, so it will just mean that they will probably have to work less weekends and things like that. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Another senior leader recognised how ***both the mentoring and additional non-contact time*** had bridged the transition between NQT and RQT, by providing much needed time and support:

When these teachers saw their timetables at the beginning of this year and saw that they had got an extra two hours a fortnight remission, that alone eased that timetable leap from an NQT timetable to a full timetable and that sense of relief that (a) I have just got a bit of breathing space and then (b) somebody is going to come along to help me... – *Wave 3 senior leader*

### 8.2.3 Increased confidence

Many senior leaders and ECTs themselves identified increased confidence as a key impact of the TSP.

**ECTs' increased confidence and self-belief was a commonly reported impact of both *internal and external mentoring*.** This included ECTs' **confidence as teachers** and their **confidence to lead a subject area or project**, resulting from increased knowledge, skills and experience. As one ECT commented:

It has made me more confident in my own abilities, which helps when you are actually teaching. It has impacted my marking and responses I get from students...that [in turn] influences what I am teaching...as well as the students' progress. – *Wave 3 ECT*

One senior leader discussed how, as a particular impact of external mentoring, **ECTs had developed increased confidence in developing the curriculum and would now be able to confidently represent their subject during a school inspection:**

It [external mentoring] has had a massive impact on what we are doing as a school and also on the confidence of the two ladies [ECTs], and how they then will be able to talk to [Ofsted] inspectors and just their own knowledge of how to develop a curriculum. I mean it has just been massive progress and impact. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

**A number of senior leaders also reported an increase in ECTs' confidence as a result of the CPD that they had undertaken.** Around a quarter highlighted examples of increased confidence in both ECTs' teaching practice and subject leadership:

The [CPD] support that they have been given has just given them more knowledge and more confidence about how to tackle their role as a subject lead. So, I think that impact is just going to keep on

going really and I don't think they would have felt as confident had it not been [supported]. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

**ECTs echoed senior leaders by reporting that attending CPD had increased their confidence, including in their subject knowledge and subject/key stage leadership.**

#### **8.2.4 Career development**

A small number of senior leaders reported that, **as a result of the *high-quality CPD* and improved confidence and enjoyment of teaching, ECTs were progressing much more quickly than they would otherwise have done.** As one senior leader commented:

I've got teachers now who have received excellent CPD, are really really confident, are enjoying what they are doing and they're doing it now when they were originally targeted to be doing that in two years' time. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Likewise, **some ECTs positively reflected on impact of the *mentoring* on their career development:**

I needed the programme to look at development in terms of career progression in the future and I want to make sure I'm in the best position to move upwards when I'm ready...The VP [vice principal] has much more experience in the wider world of teaching and that's why it's been more beneficial. – *Wave 3 ECT*

Example N below illustrates how an ECT became head of department after gaining experience through the TSP.

### Example N: Impact on career progression

When first interviewed, this ECT was teaching religious education in a local authority maintained secondary school in an urban area in the south of England. He had been teaching for four years overall, three of which had been in his current school. He had started receiving mentoring from an internal mentor and had attended a range of CPD as part of the TSP. At the time of his initial interview, he hoped that his mentor would provide him with professional advice, career guidance and general support. His mentor advised him to use the CPD funding towards a Master's degree, which could be completed alongside his teaching and would help with career progression opportunities. When interviewed at the end of the programme, he said the mentoring had increased his confidence in planning lessons for Key Stage 5 students and had improved his teaching as a result of '*experimenting more with some pedagogical styles*'. Similarly, he felt that the CPD had been helpful in improving his practice, commenting, '*it's helped me be more reflective, it's helped me plan in a more effective way*'. He reported that involvement in the TSP had supported his progression to head of department while still being an ECT. The following comment encapsulates his achievements from participation in the TSP:

My teaching has developed quite a lot. I've been working on a lot of things, especially Key Stage 5. I've recently been appointed head of department and that was one of our goals.

The ECT felt he would remain in the school for a further three to five years and planned to remain in teaching for the entirety of his career.

### 8.2.5 Improved retention of ECTs

As outlined in section 8.1, end-point interviews with senior leaders showed **an improved picture of retention overall and, despite reports of a small number of ECTs leaving schools or the profession, a notable impact of the programme on the retention of ECTs**. As one senior leader commented:

The TSP has enabled us to work really, really closely with those who have access to that coaching and that CPD. They don't want to go anywhere because of the extra support that they are getting. They are incredibly positive about it. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Senior leaders reported that, **for some ECTs, the TSP mentoring and CPD had led to them securing new roles within school**, often as subject leaders or mentors themselves. This had, in turn, retained them:

I think, with the training that we have offered the early-career [teachers], that has really helped and supported and they have all now got bigger roles. So, one is maths coordinator, one is curriculum coordinator. So, they have grown within themselves and I think that was right for them, they needed to. And it has a knock-on effect. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

I feel that, especially with our ones [ECTs] that have gone in to middle leadership...that additional support has made them think about staying in the profession more. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Several senior leaders also noted the **benefit of mentoring in terms of improved mental health, which had a knock-on effect on retention:**

I think as well, for a couple of those staff, from a mental health point of view, which also helps with retention, being able to talk about how the job impacts upon personal life and putting that in to some kind of context has been useful too. –*Wave 1 senior leader*

Example O highlights the impact of the TSP on the retention of ECTs in one school.

#### **Example O: Impact of TSP on the retention of ECTs**

The senior leader in this secondary academy reported an impact on the retention of three members of staff as a result of the programme. The ECTs involved were receiving mentoring which the leader said had *'really helped with their resilience'* and workload. They were also accessing various CPD opportunities to *'further their career'*. The senior leader felt that the school would have lost two of these ECTs *'if I hadn't been able to give them extra, because they are keen to be promoted'*. In addition, another ECT *'[would] have left the profession'* without the extra release time because she was thought by the senior leader to be struggling.

ECTs themselves were asked about their intentions to stay in teaching and whether the TSP support had helped them to remain. Eleven of the 15 ECTs interviewed at end-point said that they intended to stay in the teaching profession for the foreseeable future and, for some of these, the programme had influenced their decision. As two ECTs commented:

During my training year, I didn't think I would go into teaching, I felt very put off, but the support of the mentor in school during the TSP has made me more positive about staying in the profession. – *Wave 3 ECT*

The thought of having extra time and support was a factor in deciding to stay in the profession even for this year. – *Wave 3 ECT*

However, six of the 15 ECTs were considering applying for a teaching job in another school or might leave their school within a few years depending on how their current role developed, and what progression opportunities arose. The reason these six ECTs were considering leaving their current school generally related to a lack of progression opportunities. However, on a positive note, the increased knowledge and skills they had developed through the programme had increased their confidence and prepared them for their next steps.

Examples P and Q below are of teachers who have been supported to stay in the profession as a result of their involvement in the TSP. The first is of a teacher who has been retained in her current school as a result of re-training to teach a new subject. The second is of a teacher who, though now leaving her current school, was persuaded to remain in the profession as a result of her involvement in the TSP.

#### **Example P: Impact on retention in current school**

At baseline, this ECT was teaching in a secondary academy in an urban area in the north of England. She had been teaching for six years, all of which had been in her current school, yet she was eligible for the TSP due to taking a break for maternity leave. Her subject specialism was psychology and sociology. However, due to increased focus on the English Baccalaureate, the school no longer offered these subjects at GCSE. At the initial interview, she acknowledged that *'not every school offers the subjects I teach and I think it would be better to have a core or an EBacc subject to progress with'*. After discussions with her mentor around her future as a teacher, she decided to complete a subject knowledge enhancement course so that she could move to teaching English the next academic year. From the training, she gained confidence in teaching English up to A-level, particularly literature, which she had previously felt *'unsteady'* with. The support to access this training has been pivotal in her decision to remain in the school for another two to three years. She commented:

They are definitely making positive changes to try and keep me and I think that had I not had the opportunity to do the subject knowledge enhancement, that's not where I would be.

Completing the training will also enable her to remain in teaching over the longer-term, *'it is about staying in education rather than just staying in this school so it will have a longer lasting impact'*.

### Example Q: Impact on retention in the profession

This ECT was teaching English language and literature in a secondary academy in an urban area in the south of England when first interviewed. She had been teaching for four years, two of which had been at her current school. She was unsure whether she would remain at her school due to the culture and the limited CPD opportunities. She was also unsure about remaining in the profession. During the TSP, she received external mentoring from a senior leader in another school, which offered her a platform where she could openly discuss her experiences. She said her confidence in dealing with situations in the classroom increased and the support reversed her doubts about teaching. This meant she did not leave the school during the duration of the programme:

It [the TSP] came at a very appropriate time when I was thinking I don't know whether this is where I want to be. As much as I love my students and want to teach them, there are certain things that are not sitting well with me or I'm not comfortable with and I don't see how long I can stay here.

At the end of the programme, she had decided to leave the school, but the mentoring had '*definitely*' influenced her decision to remain in the profession. She said:

...I could see a light at the end of the tunnel...Having that support helped me build that confidence that this is something I can see through. I got into teaching because of the passion for teaching and I think he [the external mentor] helped me reignite that.

Four ECTs were less certain about whether they would remain in the profession. One was absent from school with stress and, although intending to return, felt that the job was impractical alongside having a family. Another believed that their input had little impact in the classroom and felt there was too much emphasis on data and accountability. A third explained that students' behavioural issues were making working in school difficult. A fourth ECT said that, although she intended to stay for the time being, '*the culture in the school makes me feel like I don't want to be a teacher much longer*'. For this minority of teachers, the support offered via the TSP had not been enough to overcome their personal barriers and the specific challenges they were facing in their schools, which might prevent them from remaining in the profession. As one ECT commented:

...It's made my job in the classroom easier, but that was not the biggest issue, I was reasonably good at this and happy before, but the thing which is pushing me out is that there is too much work to do. – *Wave 3 ECT*



### 8.3 Perceptions of impact on mentors

There was a consensus amongst senior leaders that involvement in the programme had **helped to retain internal mentors**, as a result of them feeling *'invested in'*.

Senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that mentors' experiences of mentoring ECTs had **enabled mentors to 'grow in their role' as leaders**. One senior leader said that the mentoring role had, *'really impacted well on those people taking on responsibility for subjects and being able to lead...it is that self-sustaining model'*, whilst another commented, *'it really refocussed them on their leadership work in supporting those two early-career teachers'*. A further senior leader recognised the opportunity that the mentoring had provided for mentors to review and evaluate their leadership role more broadly, which was resulting in wider school and Trust benefits, *'it is making them think about how their leadership impacts on colleagues outside of their own departments'*.

Some senior leaders reflected on the **impacts of the additional training mentors had received**. In one school, mentors were undertaking lead practitioner accreditation as part of their internal mentoring training. In another, when reflecting on CPD accessed by their mentor, one senior leader stated, *'I think it increased his skills, it gave him another string to his bow, another layer of being able to support staff...'*.

**Mentors interviewed at end-point reported improvements in their mentoring, coaching and leadership skills as a direct result of providing support to ECTs**. For example, one mentor said, *'I think it has helped me become a more confident leader of the school'*.

Mentors also reported **gaining new subject knowledge and 'reinvigorating' their teaching practice** as a result of gaining new strategies and ideas from lesson observations and conversations with mentees. Some had benefitted from working outside of their own subject, gaining an increased understanding of teaching across their school.

Some mentors focused on impacts in terms of their **career development**. As one mentor commented, *'it has helped my professional development massively...I am looking for lead practitioner roles with the idea of moving on to an assistant head in teaching and learning. So this has really supported my professional development'*.

Other mentors highlighted the **personal satisfaction** they gained from supporting their mentees and seeing the impact their mentoring was having on ECTs' wellbeing and confidence. As one mentor said, *'it's nice to see the development and the growth of the staff that I've been mentoring'*.

A number of mentors also reported that their participation in the TSP had **raised their awareness of ECTs' development needs and the support that needed to be put in place to address these**. As one mentor (also a deputy headteacher) said, *'it demonstrates and underlines to me that we can't just stop with the NQT programme'*.

## 9. Sustainability of programme activity and impacts

Towards the end of the programme, senior leaders were asked to report on any activities or impacts resulting from the TSP that they anticipated would be sustained moving forward. This section presents their responses. It draws on data from end-point interviews with 32 senior leaders.

### 9.1 What activities are schools sustaining?

**Senior leaders identified coaching and mentoring as key TSP activities that they would sustain.** Around a third of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that the mentoring and coaching systems that had been introduced within their schools would be continued moving forward (as noted previously in section 8). This ranged from a commitment to a mentoring and/or coaching offer for all staff, to mentoring and coaching support for targeted individuals.

**Some senior leaders were capitalising on the availability of experienced and skilled in-school school mentors and coaches to continue to provide support to staff across the school or Trust.** For example, one senior leader in a Trust reported that two teachers who had benefitted from coaching training as part of the TSP would now offer coaching to teachers across the Trust. Another senior leader reported that staff across their Trust would be developed in their new coaching model:

There is definitely a future for the model that we have implemented here, given the fact that we have been able to fund it through the TSP, for that continuing as a model for school improvement. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

**A number of senior leaders outlined plans for existing coaches to upskill other members of staff to become coaches themselves, as part of a ‘self-sustaining model’** of ongoing development:

We have got that model where actually we have got someone in the school who can now train and support and help other people to be effective coaches as well as being an incredibly effective coach herself. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

We are hoping that there will be that cycle. Even if there is no funding, we now have a pool of people who have had various training and they can deliver that kind of training, coaching and mentoring to the next generation. – *Wave 2 senior leader*

Some of the 32 senior leaders interviewed at end-point also reported that their school's **commitment to supporting teachers in the early stages of their career would be sustained beyond the programme**, with around a third reporting that the focus on coaching and mentoring for ECTs would continue. For example, one senior leader outlined the school's intention to provide '*an entitlement to having a mentor*' and the opportunity to have '*some quality one-to-one conversations*' within their plans moving forward. Some senior leaders specifically acknowledged the impact of the programme in highlighting the support needs of ECTs:

It has made me consider that people in their early careers do need this extra support and that, actually, we do expect a lot of young adults, usually young adults not always young, but coming out of NQT years and straight in to expecting them to know everything and do everything. So, I think that moving forward, I will consider that carefully and think about how we support NQTs more post-NQT. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

I think it will reinforce our belief that it is important to continue supporting our teachers in the first five years of teaching, So, how we do that will have to be adjusted with the lack of funding, but that priority will still have to be there and we will look at the support we can put in with the current funding that we have, without the additional funds. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

**Around a fifth of the 32 senior leader interviewees also reported that their CPD offer would continue to be sustained.** Reports included plans to continue offering a more 'bespoke' CPD programme for staff alongside the generic CPD already in place, extending the school's adapted CPD offer to all teachers and non-teaching staff and embedding the Trust's new Continuous Professional Growth model (see Example J). One senior leader also outlined the intention to continue to offer a distinct leadership development programme as part of the school's CPD package. **A similar number of senior leaders also reported that, where possible, the offer of additional non-contact time would be sustained.** However, the funding implications of this were recognised and some senior leaders outlined plans for a reduced entitlement. As one senior leader noted, for example, '*I can't mirror it completely, because I think that would probably be too expensive*'.

Example R below summarises how one school intends to sustain programme activities.

### **Example R: Programme sustainability**

The senior leader in this secondary school reported that certain aspects of the programme would be retained in the next academic year, with coaching described as ‘a *key legacy*’. Now that coaches had been trained to deliver this support, the senior leader commented, ‘*we’ll be able to build on that in-house without needing the funding, so that is something we will continue through into next year*’. The way CPD had been offered throughout the programme would also continue, with the senior leader reflecting, ‘*the TSP has made me think quite carefully about this innovative use of CPD*’, remarking that this learning had only arisen due to the TSP budget. The benefits for ECTs’ practice and development from external CPD had been recognised and the school now had links in place with new CPD providers, which they were planning to build on going forward. The senior leader had already arranged for one external trainer to support the school with assessment in the next academic year.

**A fifth of the 32 senior leaders interviewed reported that the relationship with their system leader would be sustained beyond the programme and, in several cases, the benefits of this link extended to all school staff.** For example, one senior leader noted, ‘*I know I have got an open door policy [with the system leader’s Trust/school]. I could send any member of staff there at any time if I wanted to*’. Sharing good practice and the opportunity to continue to discuss ideas and concerns were identified as some of the advantages of this ongoing partnership.

Similarly, four of the eight system leaders interviewed reported that they hoped to maintain links with the TSP schools they had been supporting. However, they were realistic that this might not always be possible due to time restrictions. Other system leaders felt it was unlikely that they would maintain links. One explained that it was not a long-term school-to-school programme, ‘*we had very clear actions that were quite bespoke*’ and when the programme ended it was likely that links would as well.

A small number of senior leaders, however, reported that they would not be able to sustain any programme activities or that they would be limited. Typically, senior leaders referred to the absence of funding once the programme ended as the key consideration in this respect. Other senior leaders highlighted that their school would not be in a position to continue to release staff (for example for additional non-contact time or mentoring) moving forward as they did not have the additional capacity within the existing staffing structure.

## **9.2 What impacts are likely to be sustained?**

**Around a quarter of the senior leaders interviewed at end-point reported that they could already see how their school would continue to benefit from the impact of**

**the programme.** For others, it was too early for them to assess whether impacts would be sustained in the longer-term.

Senior leaders who acknowledged sustained impact pointed to the skills, experience and confidence that staff had developed as a result of the TSP, highlighting ECTs who had become middle leaders and senior leaders whose practice had been enhanced through the programme. They reported that these '*skilled senior leaders and middle leaders with knowledge of teaching and learning*' could now share this expertise and support others. One senior leader highlighted the benefit of this in terms of distributed leadership and increased capacity across the school, the impacts of which would be sustained:

I could walk out of this school tomorrow and know now that there is more of a sustainable [model], not just within the senior leadership team, but also below that, that would support the school to keep moving forward. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Some senior leaders also reported several school-specific impacts that would be sustained. These included **curriculum changes** (such as the continuation of a Maths Mastery approach and embedding 'in the moment' planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)), **procedural changes** (such as transition arrangements) and **policy changes** (such as the development of an overarching Trust behaviour policy). Similarly, some senior leaders in schools or Trusts that had initiated new recruitment and retention strategies noted that they would continue to be developed and used (including the pre-SCITT programme (see section 8.1.1) and the Continuous Professional Growth model (Example J, as noted above)).

## 10. What challenges were faced by schools engaging in the TSP?

Some senior leaders, ECTs and mentors reported that they faced challenges with the TSP. This included operational challenges at a programme-level, as well as challenges faced internally by schools resulting from their involvement in the programme. This section draws on data from the end-point interviews with eight system leaders, the 50 baseline and 32 end-point interviews with senior leaders, and the end-point interviews with 15 ECTs and 11 mentors.

### 10.1 Programme challenges

#### 10.1.1 Funding

**Less progress was made by system leaders in schools with very small numbers of ECTs and, therefore, smaller programme budgets.** Conversely, the programme worked better where there was a large number of ECTs and an associated higher budget. As one system leader commented, *'it [the TSP] has worked particularly well in a couple of the schools where there has been a good budget'*.

Having to claim money back retrospectively was felt to be overly-complicated, and paying for the programme up front could not always be accommodated in school budgets. As one senior leader said, *'the financial aspect is most challenging'*.

Some senior leaders also reported that the timescales for applying for, and being allocated, funding did not align well with the academic year, which limited their ability to effectively plan ahead and employ appropriate staff to cover the release time of teachers involved in the programme. In addition, some ECTs were not able to enrol on CPD courses, such as Masters, when funding was received after enrolment dates.

#### 10.1.2 Selection of schools

**Some frustration was expressed by system leaders regarding the DfE data on which the selection of TSP schools was based being out-of-date.** For example, some schools identified for the TSP were reported by system leaders to be already solving their workforce challenges themselves. One system leader noted that the initial data on which the school they were supporting was identified was a year old:

...because it's a lot of money there needs to be controls in place but, sometimes, the bureaucracy hampered designing something the school needed, given the data was a year out. – *System leader*

### 10.1.3 Poor communication about the programme and strands of support

**Several senior leaders interviewed at baseline were not clear about the strand structure of the programme and felt that the content of the programme had not been clearly explained to them.** Some senior leaders did not feel that they had been given enough information on what was available, the extent to which they could drive the process, and what the support would look like in reality. The baseline interviews suggested that there had been a degree of inconsistency in the approach taken as to how the structure of the programme was communicated to senior leaders. While some senior leaders were given a detailed explanation of all the options available, others were only presented with a sub-set of activities that the system leader and the DfE representative thought relevant to the school. A minority of senior leaders were completely unaware of the TSP's strand structure. This helps to explain why senior leaders described what they were doing differently, with some struggling to identify and disentangle different strands. As one headteacher said, '*I'm not really sure of the parameters or the support she [system leader] is able to offer*'.

### 10.1.4 Bureaucracy

At end-point, several system leaders and senior leaders commented on **the excessive bureaucracy and onerous nature of the process**, which included completing trackers and '*countless spreadsheets*'. In addition, during baseline and end-point interviews, several senior leaders reported that the DfE forms and paperwork were '*wordy*', '*excessive*', '*difficult*' and '*unclear*'. One commented on the '*longwinded emails from the DfE*' on how to complete Excel grids.

One system leader commented that DfE systems were '*so convoluted and so hard to manage*' that schools were deterred from claiming funding. They gave an example of a school which could have claimed £6,000 worth of grants throughout the programme for the activities they put in place but, because of the paperwork, they only did this at the end of the programme when prompted by the system leader.

It is worth noting that, during the course of the programme, feedback on these areas was provided to DfE. As a result, some of the form filling was reduced. In addition, a number of webinars were run which explained how to claim the funding.

On the whole, system leaders were reported to have helped senior leaders to navigate the administrative side of the process. However, time spent on form filling and bureaucracy, particularly at the start of the process, reduced the time system leaders could give to supporting schools.

### 10.1.5 Timing

**For some schools, the TSP was introduced when timetables and staffing were already fixed for the academic year**, so finding extra non-contact time for teachers (ECTs and internal mentors) was challenging, especially in schools that were struggling to recruit and retain teachers. For example, one senior leader said, *'when it's being introduced mid-year, you can't easily suddenly change timetables and I think that's a key barrier in this programme for secondary schools'*. A system leader commented that providing funding for additional capacity in November did not *'fit with the [educational] cycle, as it's not possible to recruit at that time. All schools [I have supported] have been very clear that the time we approached them was completely wrong'*.

### 10.1.6 Lack of evidence-informed activities

The **lack of evidence-informed activities to draw on to support TSP schools** was also mentioned by two system leaders. This resulted in TSP schools using the funds for a range of different approaches to retain ECTs, with not all of them having been proven to be effective. As one system leader commented, *'one of the weaknesses is that there is no real guidance on what type of training is most effective in helping ECTs stay in the career. You're basically saying to schools 'do what you like''*.

## 10.2 School challenges

### 10.2.1 Teachers being out of the classroom

The biggest concern of senior leaders and ECTs interviewed at end-point was the negative impact on pupils' learning as a result of ECTs and internal mentors being out of the classroom. One ECT commented, *'behaviourally, it's been a challenge'*. Senior leaders highlighted that it was often their higher-quality, more experienced teachers or middle leaders who were supporting/mentoring ECTs, which meant some of their strongest teachers were not in the classroom. A number of senior leaders also reported difficulties in finding appropriate cover for lessons internally and raised concerns about the quality of supply cover compared to permanent teaching staff. These issues were more apparent in schools that had a larger number of ECTs taking part in the programme, were smaller in size, or in which teachers were being taken out of the same lesson on multiple occasions. Example S below describes the impact in one school of teachers being out of the classroom.



### **Example S: Impact of teachers being out of the classroom**

One primary academy had four ECTs and two internal mentors involved in the TSP. They had a supply teacher who provided TSP and other cover in the school. A senior leader said, *'it hasn't always been easy to make sure that the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms has been maintained whilst freeing people up'*. There were particular issues with a challenging cohort, which one of the mentors taught.

The mentors also recognised the impact of being out of the classroom. One noted that supply cover may not be appropriate and another echoed this saying, *'I think cover has probably been the biggest challenge and I think making sure that the whole needs of the school are taken into the bigger picture'*. They added, *'you don't want to jeopardise other areas'*.

## **10.2.2 Increased workload**

Although there were reports that the TSP had helped some ECTs with their workload, there were other cases where ECTs felt that their participation in the programme had in fact increased their workload. For example, some ECTs reported difficulties in balancing the time demands of the programme with their usual workload, particularly when attending training or obtaining qualifications. In addition, some ECTs felt that being out of the classroom impacted negatively on their workload as a result of having to set cover work, mark the work when they arrived back, catch up on what had happened whilst being away and chase up behavioural issues.

A number of senior leaders and mentors felt that their participation in the TSP had increased their workload. They felt that the process was *'paper heavy upfront'* and the need to audit, evidence and claim back for what they were doing was time consuming. Overseeing and monitoring the programme and attending meetings also added to senior leaders' workload. As one senior leader commented:

In terms of admin staff and school leadership, the workload has been significantly increased as a result of the exercise of auditing and evidencing what you're doing. That is a massive frustration. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Again, this impacted more in schools, which had a larger number of ECTs taking part in the TSP or, which were smaller in size.

### 10.2.3 Decreased retention in TSP schools

**During end-point interviews, a small number of senior leaders noted an increase in the number of staff leaving, or potentially leaving, the school** as a result of their enhanced training, skills and experience (for example as subject leaders or mentors), although they noted that those teachers were retained within the teaching profession.

## 11. What is the learning for future recruitment and retention programmes?

This section details the persistent teacher recruitment and retention challenges - primarily at a national level - which the TSP was unable to tackle. It also explores the effective elements of the programme which could be used more broadly across schools to help them address recruitment and retention issues. It draws on data from end-point interviews with 32 senior leaders, 15 ECTs and 11 mentors.

### 11.1 What challenges was the programme unable to tackle?

During end-point interviews, senior leaders and ECTs were asked to identify recruitment and retention challenges that the programme had not been able to address. Senior leaders' responses typically reflected some of the challenges outlined during the baseline interviews, which were seen as ongoing or beyond the scope of the programme.

Several senior leaders highlighted **challenges at a national level**, which they felt the programme, despite any perceived impact at individual school level, had not been able to overcome. **A lack of teachers and teacher quality** presented a continuing challenge for schools. In particular, senior leaders pointed to the national recruitment issues in shortage subjects such as science, maths and modern foreign languages and acknowledged that the overall scarcity of available teachers in these areas could not be addressed by the TSP. As one leader stated, *'it is not able to address the fundamental problem that there are not enough good people coming through into the system'*. Other comments included:

What madness for our school system that when I put a job advert out I can't even get anyone to apply or I get no more than one person. –  
*Wave 3 senior leader*

If we advertise for a science teacher, for example we have got an advert out for a head of science, and we have had zero applicants and that is a similar case across the country. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

A number of senior leaders commented that **the national perception of teaching as a career was not as favourable as that of other professions**, with one senior leader noting, *'teaching isn't as attractive a profession as it could be out there in the public and out there in the media. It is a bit of a second rate profession'*. Linked to this, some senior leaders pointed to the issue that teacher salaries were often not comparable with other graduate jobs, recognising that, *'people's view of teaching is that it is just too tough and that it is not well paid enough'*. As one senior leader commented:

They [teachers] shouldn't be accepting significantly less money [than other graduate professions] for doing a very difficult job. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Senior leaders reported that **school location** was a continued challenge for schools that the programme had not been able to influence. This included challenges associated with poor transport links, cost of living, London fringe boundaries (and the salary implications of this), high deprivation and need (and associated workload pressures) and school reputation. As one senior leader noted:

I think, because where our school is located within [name of city] as well, it takes a certain type of teacher to want to come and teach and to have the resilience to come and teach in a school with such a high Pupil Premium rate. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Several leaders also referred to a **school's Ofsted grading** and the implications of this on its ability to recruit and retain staff as an ongoing challenge. One senior leader explained that their school had worked on improving provision and, in turn, its reputation. However, their existing Ofsted grading did not yet reflect this (as they had not been re-inspected), which still had a negative impact on how the school was perceived:

We can change how we operate as a school and how we are perceived by others, but unfortunately some of that [reputation] is [based on] an Ofsted grading. They [Ofsted] still hold a lot of water by a two and a bit day visit, but we are not going to shift that very readily– *Wave 1 senior leader*

A number of senior leaders highlighted the **pressures of the job, particularly in relation to workload and accountability**. One senior leader commented:

The reality is in schools that teacher timetable loads are too high for people to have anything other than barely enough time to plan and to teach and to mark. And, until we have teaching contact time which is lower, we won't really improve conditions and I am not sure that is going to happen, because there aren't enough people flowing into the system and the cost of that is too great. – *Wave 3 senior leader*

Another said, '*I think it is just the accountability. People going in to their lessons, looking at their books, asking kids what they think. You know, when I started teaching I never had any of that...*'

Another ongoing challenge that was not addressed by the programme was **school budget constraints**. This restricted the extent to which schools could offer salary increases and bonuses and create middle leader roles in their attempts to retain staff.

Several senior leaders also expressed their concerns regarding **the continued need for schools to use supply agencies** as a consequence of some of these issues and identified this as an ongoing challenge for schools, again highlighting the cost implications. Indeed, one senior leader stated, *'I think there is still a massive overreliance on teaching agencies, which cost schools a fortune...'*

When asked what would make teaching more attractive and retain more teachers in the profession, ECTs and mentors echoed senior leaders' views. The key areas they highlighted were:

- strong leadership with a culture of openness and support
- decreased workload and a better work-life balance, including more time for planning
- a more competitive salary in line with other professions
- a higher profile and more positive image nationally
- more CPD and support
- reduced negative scrutiny, including by Ofsted
- teachers feeling listened to, valued and supported so that they can be resilient to stress and accountability
- more exposure of potential recruits to the classroom so they fully understand the nature of teaching before they join the profession.

Selected quotes from ECTs are included below:

To make it more attractive and competitive with other careers so a consideration of the remuneration of teachers on a national scale. – *Wave 2 ECT*

When you tell people that's what you do, the response is 'rather you than me'. Nationally, in the media, teachers aren't as respected any more, it seems like we must be mad. – *Wave 3 ECT*

Work life balance is huge and Ofsted pressure is ridiculous. – *Wave 3 ECT*

## 11.2 What elements of the programme could be used across schools to address recruitment and retention challenges?

Senior leaders were asked to comment on how any elements of the TSP could, or should, be used across schools to address recruitment and retention challenges.

One senior leader suggested that programmes such as the TSP could be a '**catalyst for change**', refocusing and 'kick-starting' schools:

I think it [the TSP] was a real catalyst for change for us and it is funny how a relatively small amount of finance and coaching and time for discussing that leadership can then generate much more interest. –  
*Wave 2 senior leader*

Several senior leaders reported that **support from an experienced colleague** such as the system leader was a valuable aspect of the programme that could be implemented in other schools. However, comments typically referred to the broader benefits of this, not just in relation to recruitment and retention, but as an opportunity for **strategic discussion on wider issues**. As one senior leader noted, *'I think any school would benefit from having that wisdom and having a light really shone on 'what are the real key issues for this school?''*

Other senior leaders suggested that the **tailored and flexible nature of the programme** was a principle that could be extended to other programmes. One senior leader acknowledged that this bespoke arrangement enabled local and regional differences and individual recruitment and retention challenges to be addressed. Similarly, another senior leader said, *'to be able to make sure that it hits individual needs and is done in a way that suits individuals I think is something that is crucial'*.

The opportunity for schools to **network and establish links with other schools** was also identified as an element of the programme that could be shared across schools. Senior leaders acknowledged that school-to-school support enabled good practice to be observed and issues and ideas discussed at both teacher and senior leader level. As one senior leader said, *'I just think it has been a really good programme, for staff to be able to go to other schools and meet other people and just experience life in a different school'*.

A number of senior leaders referred to more programme-specific elements of the TSP that schools would find beneficial in terms of recruitment and retention<sup>12</sup>. Around a third of senior leaders highlighted the **provision of additional non-contact time for ECTs as a key element of the programme** which could be offered in other schools. As one senior leader noted, *'just that additional half a day out of class does make all the difference...that has made a big impact on staff, because it is that time to stop, think, do'*. Another reflected that it was this aspect of the TSP that had made the biggest difference:

If the additional time away from the classroom that I have been able to give my teachers, my early-career teachers in particular...if that could be replicated...I think it would make an enormous difference, enormous difference to retention and recruitment and teacher wellbeing and workload and all of those things that the Government say that they want to make a difference to. I really do. – *Wave 1 senior leader*

Likewise, an **ongoing commitment to a targeted CPD offer for ECTs** was another element of the programme that senior leaders felt could be replicated across schools moving forward. As one senior leader said, *'I think schools having more capacity for providing appropriate CPD is helpful'* and another suggested, *'I think that if they were all given an extra CPD voucher that would be helpful'*.

Several references were also made to the **mentoring and coaching model being a key transferable element**. This included suggestions in relation to providing coaching and mentoring training for senior staff and creating a network of suitably experienced staff who were willing to act as external mentors for other schools.

Other senior leaders referred to more specific outcomes of their involvement in the programme as exemplars of practice that could be shared with other schools. Examples included replacing the 'hierarchical' style teacher appraisal system with a focus on talent and development conversations as part of a Continuous Professional Growth model (see Example J) and the potential for wider application of the pre-SCITT training programme approach (mentioned in section 8.1.1).

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<sup>12</sup> The provision of additional non-contact time, mentoring/coaching and CPD for ECTs will be offered to teachers in the second year of teaching as part of the [Early Career Framework](#)

It is important to note that many of these activities have associated **capacity and financial implications** and senior leaders reported the importance of the TSP funding in this respect.

Although this did not form part of the TSP, several senior leaders also suggested that it would be useful to **create opportunities and networks for senior leaders** to share effective practice in approaches to recruitment and retention, including what works in developing, and improving the retention of, ECTs.



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## Appendix 1. Interview and case-study sampling and characteristics

**Table 4 The profile of the case-study schools**

Case Study School	Wave	TSP Phase	Urban/rural	School Type	Region	Strands
1	2	Primary	Rural	Maintained	Midlands	External mentoring; early-career support; system leader support
2	1	Secondary	Urban	Academy	South	Internal mentoring; early-career support
3*	1	Primary	Urban	Academy	North	External mentoring; system leader support
4	2	Primary	Urban	Academy	North	Internal mentoring; system leader support
5	3	Primary	Urban	Academy	Midlands	Internal mentoring; early-career support
6*	3	Secondary	Urban	Academy	Midlands	Internal mentoring; early-career support
7	3	Secondary	Urban	Academy	North	Internal mentoring; early-career support
8	3	Secondary	Urban	Academy	Midlands	Internal mentoring; early-career support

\*Denotes those schools, which took part in a follow-up case-study visit in spring 2020

**Table 5 Characteristics of senior leaders and schools involved in interviews, split by telephone interviews and case studies**

	<b>Number of senior leaders interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in senior leader telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of senior leaders interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in senior leader telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of senior leaders interviewed during case Studies</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in senior leader interviews during case studies</b>	<b>Number of senior leaders interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in senior leader interviews at both time points during case studies</b>
<b>School phase</b>								
Primary	26	26	17	17	5	4	1	1
Secondary	29	25	10	12	6	4	1	1
<b>Region</b>								
North	19	16	9	11	6	3	1	1
Midlands	18	18	6	6	4	4	1	1
South	18	17	12	12	1	1	0	0
<b>Urban/rural</b>								
Urban	46	42	21	23	10	7	2	2

	<b>Number of <i>senior leaders</i> interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of <i>schools</i> represented in senior leader telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of <i>senior leaders</i> interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of <i>schools</i> represented in senior leader telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of <i>senior leaders</i> interviewed during case Studies</b>	<b>Number of <i>schools</i> represented in senior leader interviews during case studies</b>	<b>Number of <i>senior leaders</i> interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of <i>schools</i> represented in senior leader interviews at both time points during case studies</b>
Rural	6	6	4	4	1	1	0	0
Missing	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
<b>School type</b>								
Maintained	17	17	10	10	2	2	1	1
Academy	38	34	17	19	9	6	1	1
<b>TSP Wave</b>								
Wave 1	16	16	11	11	3	2	1	1
Wave 2	9	9	4	4	2	2	0	0
Wave 3	30	26	12	14	6	4	1	1

**Table 6 Characteristics of ECTs and schools involved in interviews, split by telephone interviews and case studies**

	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed during case Studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT interviews during case studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of schools involved in ECT interviews both time points level during case studies</b>
<b>School phase</b>								
Primary	17	15	5	5	15	4	3	1
Secondary	32	23	10	10	17	4	1	1
All through school	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Region</b>								
North	15	13	4	4	13	3	3	1
Midlands	20	15	5	5	16	4	1	1
South	16	12	6	6	3	1	0	0

	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed during case Studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in ECT interviews during case studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of ECTs interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of schools involved in ECT interviews both time points level during case studies</b>
<b>Urban/rural</b>								
Urban	39	29	12	12	29	7	4	2
Rural	12	11	3	3	3	1	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>School type</b>								
Maintained	17	13	4	4	9	2	1	1
Academy	34	27	11	11	23	6	3	1
<b>TSP Wave</b>								
Wave 1	16	12	2	2	8	2	3	1
Wave 2	9	8	2	2	7	2	0	0
Wave 3	26	20	11	11	17	4	1	1

**Table 7 Characteristics of mentors and schools involved in interviews, split by telephone interviews and case studies**

	<b>Number of mentors interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed during case studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor interviews during case studies</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor interviews at both time points during case studies</b>
<b>School phase</b>								
Primary	10	10	3	3	9	4	0	0
Secondary	17	15	6	6	8	4	2	1
<b>Region</b>								
North	12	11	4	4	7	3	0	0
Midlands	5	4	1	1	9	4	2	1
South	10	10	4	4	1	1	0	0
<b>Urban/rural</b>								
Urban	17	15	4	4	16	7	2	1
Rural	8	8	5	5	1	1	0	0

	<b>Number of mentors interviewed by telephone (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor telephone interviews (during whole evaluation)</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed by telephone at both time points</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor telephone interviews at both time points</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed during case studies (Baseline and follow up)</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor interviews during case studies</b>	<b>Number of mentors interviewed at both time points during case studies</b>	<b>Number of schools represented in mentor interviews at both time points during case studies</b>
Missing	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>School type</b>								
Maintained	9	9	7	7	6	2	2	1
Academy	18	16	2	2	11	6	0	0
<b>TSP Wave</b>								
Wave 1	5	5	1	1	5	2	0	0
Wave 2	5	5	3	3	3	2	0	0
Wave 3	17	15	5	5	9	4	2	1



## Appendix 2. Examples of CPD undertaken by ECTs

- Ambition Institute leaders programmes
- Apple Music training
- Assessment for learning
- Behaviour management (for example, provided by a Pupil Referral unit)
- Coaching for Leaders
- Exam preparation
- Forest school training
- Giving feedback
- Global Art course
- ICT Mark
- Inspiring Change
- Mastering maths/other maths courses
- Master's degree qualifications e.g. a Leadership in Education Masters (in one school, extra modules of a Master's qualification were funded if a teacher stayed at school after the two years of the TSP)
- Mentor training
- National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML)
- National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL)
- National SENCO Award
- Outstanding Teacher programme
- Pedagogy and teaching approaches
- Phonics
- Prince's Trust residential weekend for history teachers
- PSHE Award
- Raising aspirations
- RE
- Reducing workload
- Resilience programmes
- Safeguarding
- Sharing of practice with local partnership schools (e.g. schools within a Trust or Teaching Alliance sharing planning meetings and internal training)
- SSAT support to develop lead practitioners
- Subject knowledge-related (various)
- The Institute for Teaching's Transforming Teaching Programme
- Transformational Leadership Programme
- Voice 21 Oracy Leaders Programme
- Wellbeing
- Writing course

## Appendix 3. Case-study vignettes

### Case study A

#### Background

This case-study school is a primary school in an urban area in the north of England. The school is classified as an Academy/Free school and was part of wave 1 of the TSP. The school underwent forced academisation at the beginning of 2018, after being graded 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in January 2017. During this process there was a high turnover of staff, notably in senior and middle leadership positions. The school has joined a MAT with another local primary school, with the headship role being filled by a deputy headteacher from the partner school. Historically, the school has faced challenges with the recruitment and retention of teachers, with the headteacher commenting that '*staffing had been turbulent long-term*'.

#### System leader support

The headteacher reported that the practical support provided by the system leader (who was an NLE) had been particularly helpful. This included mentoring and coaching for herself, with a focus on reflecting upon and improving the recruitment process. The system leader shared the successful recruitment process used in his own school, which the headteacher found very beneficial. She noted that the school had previously taken a reactive approach to staffing, whereas the system leader encouraged her to be more proactive. She commented, '*we look at possible staffing problems that will come up, particularly at this time of year...It just helps me to think more strategically*'.

The work with the system leader had been imperative for supporting the school's recruitment strategy. The headteacher felt that, although the reputation of the school would still pose a barrier, by introducing new recruitment practices suggested by the system leader, the pool and calibre of applications had improved. The school had introduced personalised job adverts, producing a comprehensive, attractive package for prospective teachers, and had changed the time of recruitment to when there was considered to be less competition. The headteacher commented, '*I definitely believe that more people have come to look round purely because of the work that the NLE did on recruitment*'.

#### External mentoring support

Four ECTs were paired with experienced teachers based in a partner school in their MAT, who offered extensive year group and subject-specific support. ECTs found their

matches successful, with one commenting, *'all the problems that we might come across as teachers, they've already dealt with, because they're experienced teachers...we can sort things as they come up'*. Teachers within the two partner schools have been teaching children the same content, with the aim that outstanding practice can be mirrored in the TSP school. To support this, at the beginning of the programme, mentors provided ECTs with planning and resources for lessons, carried out moderations together and attended joint CPD sessions at the partner school. Close links were developed with the year group teaching teams in the partner school, with ECTs being invited to attend year group meetings, giving them the chance to participate in the further sharing of resources and practice. One ECT commented, *'it's not just a one-way street, there's things that I send to them, and things that they send to me...it's a really supportive team'*.

In the early stages of the programme, mentors and the headteacher were concerned that too much support was being given to ECTs, with them not being given enough responsibility. This was no longer a concern at end-point, as it became evident that ECTs had become more independent and less reliant on the mentoring support.

The improvements in the ECTs' quality of teaching, resulting from the mentoring support, was widely recognised. The headteacher said, *'what they've achieved in a year, in terms of their class teaching has just been phenomenal'*, as well as commenting that the ECTs were all now *'good to outstanding teachers'*. The ECTs' progress was monitored through the logs ECTs had been asked to complete and the performance management tracker used by the school. There were additional successes noted for two ECTs: one had recently gained a TLR, while another, in her second year of teaching, had become the school's maths lead.

ECTs themselves felt that they were better able to lead and monitor their subjects and had greater confidence teaching across the curriculum, not just in their subject specialism. This improved quality of teaching was evidenced through pupils' books, with ECTs and the headteacher commenting that more positive feedback was now being given when books were reviewed. ECTs were meeting less regularly with mentors and feeling less reliant on their support, however the two schools continued to support one another as the partnership grew.

The senior leader attributed the success of the mentoring to the close link between the two schools, commenting, *'if it was a school that wasn't in our MAT, I don't think there would have been that investment. People have gone above and beyond what they're being paid for'*.

## **Early-career support**

ECTs received a ten per cent timetable reduction, which was welcomed, with one ECT reporting, *'workload is tough, it's big, so I am grateful for that extra time'*. The school had

provided dedicated space for ECTs to spend their release time and given them access to additional resources to research their subjects and teaching practice. ECTs stated that most of their release time was spent on CPD tasks and developing subject leadership skills, such as working on action plans or implementing CPD. Some of the time had been used for PPA, which the headteacher did not approve of, so monitored it closely. A log system was implemented to ensure time was being used effectively and strategically. ECTs felt additional pressure from this, with one ECT commenting:

Sometimes there's an expectation from management that, because you've got the time, everything is going to be absolutely perfect...sometimes leaders might mention 'well you've had this time so this should have been done'...every now and then, it might come across as a negative...there's a lot of pressure.

ECTs had been engaging in a wide range of CPD courses tailored to their subject specialisms and their development needs, and the headteacher and ECTs noted the importance of the TSP funding for this CPD, as well as the timetable reduction. All four ECTs attended subject management courses delivered by the local authority, to support understanding of the expectations of the new Ofsted framework.

One ECT recognised that the additional time had impacted on both their workload and their subject leadership. ECTs identified that, from the CPD accessed, they had gained a thorough understanding of the new Ofsted framework and felt better prepared for discussing their subject when they had their next Ofsted visit, which was imminent. One ECT (a maths lead) recognised that, by attending CPD on the maths mastery approach, pupil data in maths had accelerated. Another ECT commented on the effect of the range of CPD they had attended, '*[the CPD] definitely impacted in the classroom and ultimately on [pupils'] progress, the children are moving on further because of all the support and training. Teaching styles, different schemes of work, all of it.*'

## **Sustainability of activities and outcomes**

The headteacher commented that some of the support received from the partner school would have been in place anyway, but the programme had '*formalised*' this support. She felt that the practice and impacts the school had gained from involvement would outlive the programme. She said, '*[we] will try to embed the TSP strategies as standard practice*'. This included new recruitment strategies introduced following system leader support and extra time for ECTs (although she noted this may need to reduce from weekly to fortnightly). She raised the concern that, as teachers progress, additional time and support is taken away, causing teachers to leave the profession. She also noted that the school struggled to retain mid-career teachers rather than ECTs. This was their

rationale for keeping the support in place. The headteacher hoped that the activities and impacts would continue to be realised.

When ECTs were asked about their plans to remain in teaching, only one of the four was certain she would remain in the profession over the longer-term. Although ECTs were feeling supported and more confident in their teaching, they still found the job too stressful and some did not feel that teaching was compatible with their hopes of starting families.

## Case study B

### Background

This case-study school is a secondary school in an urban coastal area in the midlands. It has recently gained Academy status and has been rated as 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted. At the time of the baseline visit, the school was experiencing difficulties with its reputation, which stemmed from low parental perceptions and criticism from competing local MATs for their low-grade results, which had been attributed to a poor curriculum structure. These factors, along with the isolated coastal location of the school, were noted as the key reasons for retention and recruitment challenges in the school. The school was approached by the DfE to take part in the third wave of the TSP. It was hoped that investing in staff and providing a programme of support would not only help to retain current teachers, but would also make teaching at the school more appealing to potential applicants.

### System leader support

The system leader had visited the school each half term, supporting all members of the SLT, who each developed an action plan based on their area of school development. The system leader had helped the headteacher to develop the overall programme of activities, and had also worked with the assistant headteacher for teaching and learning who had a responsibility for the ECTs on the programme. The quote below from the assistant headteacher summarises how helpful she found the system leader support:

Her support was really beneficial last January when we first applied and were successful for the funding and then it was really more of a check-in, because we flew with it and had a really clear idea of what we wanted to do...If I did need support, she's on the end of an email...that's been really beneficial so we can move on more quickly.

The senior leader felt that, although the support from the system leader had not gone further than the SLT, the school had embedded new ways of working as a result of the support provided, which would impact across the whole school.

### Internal mentoring support

Throughout the programme, ten ECTs had received support from eight internal mentors. The school had adopted a coaching model, with coaches acting as facilitators. This provided a more holistic approach, which concentrated on the ECT as a whole person and helped them find their own solutions to problems. Mentees liked having the time set

aside to seek advice from someone more experienced, with one ECT describing the coaching as a *'relaxing, informal way of exploring where you need to develop'*. There were, however, elements of the coaching that had worked less well. Both mentors and ECTs felt that the coaching training should have happened prior to any meetings taking place as, after this training was delivered, the focus of the sessions altered and any work done previously was no longer built upon. ECTs and coaches were matched by the SLT. For most, this relationship worked well, but one ECT found it particularly difficult to open up as she did not know her coach, thus demonstrating the importance of effective matching for the programme to be successful. The senior leader also spoke of the difficulties in arranging coaching sessions as coaches and ECTs' free lessons did not always coincide. One ECT commented on the advantage of having an in-subject coach, as this meant that the coach had an understanding of the practical and theoretical elements of the subject content, allowing the coaching to progress more quickly.

Despite some challenges, ECTs, mentors and the senior leader all felt very positive about the outcomes from the coaching. One ECT felt that the coaching had supported his professional development and had enabled him to improve aspects of curriculum planning, such as differentiating tasks for students of different abilities. He said of the coaching, *'it's been helpful to have that time to try and not let things stagnate and to keep doing the same things, actually there is room for improvement and you can change things to make it more understandable and enjoyable for the students'*. Coaches believed the coaching was having positive impacts not just on ECTs' teaching practice and confidence, but also in terms of their wellbeing and stress, with one commenting, *'this is more about wellbeing I find than actual classroom strategies'*, while another noted that giving ECTs a safe space with someone to talk to was really valuable. The senior leader echoed this point, whilst also noting that the coaching had strengthened relationships between the staff and the school community and had positively impacted on the school's ethos and values.

## **Early-career support**

ECTs had received additional non-contact time and CPD as part of the programme. They were given the option of one extra free lesson a week or one full day each half term. Only one ECT chose the latter option, but admitted this had not worked as well due to distractions on the day they had put aside, including behaviour issues or queries from the cover teacher delivering their lesson. ECTs reported that the additional non-contact time had been the most effective element of the programme for alleviating pressure and keeping on top of workload. As one ECT commented, *'I use the time to build on my skills and how I deliver lessons. I might research different ways of delivering lessons and looking at pedagogy'*. This is how the senior leader intended this time to be spent, with these activities being built upon in coaching sessions.

Initially, the senior leader was concerned about releasing ECTs for CPD as they felt that covering lessons with supply teachers risked reduced and inconsistent quality of teaching. To overcome this, the senior leader was keen to '*think creatively*', including through creating a bank of pre-prepared lessons for supply teachers to deliver, which focussed on students' personal development, or through arranging for external speakers to come into school. This bank of pre-prepared lessons also meant that ECTs being released did not have their workload increased through having to plan a lesson for a supply teacher to deliver. When this was revisited at end-point, sessions with external speakers had come to fruition and had been successful.

The ECT interviewed at the follow-up visit acknowledged that additional time had been very valuable. It had helped him manage his workload which had, in turn, improved his wellbeing and allowed him to plan and resource the maths lessons he taught, which was not his subject specialism. Without this time, in which he gained a better understanding around teaching certain elements of maths, he commented, '*I would have felt out of my depth*'. The senior leader also reported that ECTs valued this time the most as a lack of time was always raised as an issue in staff surveys.

The TSP had also allowed the school to offer more external CPD. This had included bringing in external speakers to work with the ECTs as a group, then on a one-to-one basis to develop individual targets. There were also creative sessions, such as one provided by the Royal Shakespeare Company, which ran a workshop with pupils and teachers, as well as subject-specific training for staff. The senior leader commented, '*having the flexibility with CPD to bring in external motivators, external challenge...has been the best thing for me*'. The senior leader also noted wider benefits of the CPD, through ECTs disseminating what had been learnt from sessions with external speakers to other teachers in the school. The ECT interviewed at end-point also commented on the positive outcomes from CPD, such as being able to embed new ideas into teaching practice, offer students further enrichment through an after-school club and being better informed on ways of supporting students with additional educational needs. However, an issue was raised regarding courses sometimes being rejected, not because of financial issues but due to a lack of cover.

## **Sustainability of activities and outcomes**

The senior leader reported that the school would not be able to afford to fully recreate the programme for the next academic year, yet there were aspects that they would be able to retain. In particular, the coaching was seen to be '*a key legacy*' of the programme. Now that coaches had been trained to deliver this support, the senior leader commented, '*we'll be able to build on that in-house without needing the funding, so that is something we will continue through into next year*'. The way CPD was delivered throughout the programme would also continue, with the senior leader commenting, '*the TSP has made me think*



*quite carefully about this innovative use of CPD*', remarking that these opportunities had only arisen thanks to the TSP budget. The benefits for teachers' practice and development from having external educationalists come into school was recognised and the school will build on these links going forwards. One speaker has already been booked to support the school with assessment in the next academic year.

The senior leader felt that a programme such as the TSP could support retention, particularly of ECTs as they progress, but was still unsure of whether improvements in recruitment could be realised.



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