National Standards for school-based initial teacher training (ITT) mentors

July 2016

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Foreword

A key recommendation from Sir Andrew Carter's review of initial teacher training (ITT) was for a set of non-statutory standards to be developed to help bring greater coherence and consistency to the school-based mentoring arrangements for trainee teachers.

The Teaching Schools Council (TSC) were delighted to be asked by the Secretary of State to carry out this piece of work, and invited a group of practising school leaders, with significant experience of leading ITT in their schools, to take this project forward, initially with Vicky Beer, and latterly myself, as Chair. We consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders during the course of the project, including current and former trainees, school-based mentors, leaders of school-led partnerships, colleagues from university Departments of Education and Ofsted. On behalf of the mentor standards group, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who gave up time to speak and write to us.

We have identified three main aims that we hope these standards will achieve:

1. To foster greater consistency in the practice of mentors by identifying the effective characteristics of mentoring, leading, in turn, to an improved and more coherent experience for trainees, so that they develop into effective teachers.

2. To raise the profile of mentoring and provide a framework for the professional development of current and aspiring mentors. The contribution mentors make to their colleagues' practice will help raise standards and in turn improve the quality of teaching across the profession, leading to improved outcomes for children. We hope that the standards will support the development of a sense of identity for ITT mentors and support the growth of ITT mentor networks.

3. To contribute towards the building of a culture of coaching and mentoring in schools. Noting the recent White Paper's announcement that qualified teacher status is to be replaced with a new stronger accreditation for teachers we believe the standards have resonance beyond the training period and into teachers' early professional development, where high-quality mentoring and coaching are just as valuable.

In summary, we have developed a set of non-statutory standards that we believe will be useful to a broad range of ITT mentors with a diverse range of experience and responsibility - from the recently qualified teacher who has taken on their first mentee, to the professional mentor who is responsible for groups of trainees and teachers in the early years of their careers.

I would like to add my personal thanks to my colleagues who sat on the group, Michael Barrett, Sir Andrew Carter, Claire Carter, John Hardy and Helen Parkinson for sharing their wisdom, experience and insights so freely. Also, on behalf of the group, I would like to thank the Department for Education's Secretariat, without whose help and support we could not have completed this important work.

Gary Holden
Chair of the Teaching Schools Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

i. A key recommendation in the 2015 Carter Review was for a set of national standards to be developed to help bring greater coherence and consistency to the school-based mentoring arrangements for trainee teachers. The Carter Review was clear that mentoring should have greater status and recognition, within schools and within the ITT system as a whole, and that the qualities of effective mentors should be better understood across the system.

ii. In response to Carter's recommendation, the Government commissioned the Teaching Schools Council to develop standards for school-based ITT mentors, with the key aim of helping to promote the importance of the role and create a better shared understanding of the characteristics of effective mentoring across the ITT sector.

iii. The Teaching Schools Council appointed a working group comprised of headteachers and ITT leads from Teaching Schools with experience of working in a range of school-based ITT settings:

- Michael Barratt, Principal of the Priory School
- Sir Andrew Carter, Headteacher of South Farnham School
- Claire Carter, Head of Leadership Development, The White Horse Federation
- John Hardy, Head of St. John Vianney Primary School
- Helen Parkinson, Director of ITT, Ashton-on-Mersey SCITT

Methodology

iv. To develop these standards, the review group gathered evidence and views through a range of activities including: meetings within the Teaching Schools networks; focus groups with teacher trainees, newly-qualified teachers and recently-qualified teachers; extensive discussions with sector experts and stakeholders; and a review of the existing evidence base, including Andrew Carter's review findings, international and Ofsted evidence. A summary of key findings is presented in this report.

Recommendations

v. This report makes recommendations to all ITT providers to adopt the mentor standards, which should inform the selection, training and resourcing of mentors in England. We have also recommended that Ofsted, who already inspect the quality of mentoring, should have regard to the standards on any ITE inspection.

About the mentor standards and how they should be used

vi. We have developed the mentor standards based on the evidence we gathered which are set out in four separate but related areas: personal qualities; teaching; professionalism; and self-development and working in partnership. We have also

considered how the standards could be used by mentors, aspiring mentors and ITT providers.

Key findings

1. The review group has developed a set of national standards for school-based ITT mentors, which are underpinned by the Teachers' Standards; these set out the minimum level of practice expected of teachers, and are used to assess all trainees working towards qualified teacher status (QTS) and in future teacher accreditation.

2. For the purpose of this work, the definition of a mentor should be read as follows:

   "A mentor is a suitably-experienced teacher who has formal responsibility to work collaboratively within the ITT partnership to help ensure the trainee receives the highest-quality training".

3. We reviewed the findings of Sir Andrew Carter's call for evidence on the quality and effectiveness of mentoring in England and sought feedback from a range of providers on the roles and responsibilities for mentors.

4. We agree with Carter's findings that the best programmes give careful thought as to how to train and value mentors effectively – both when teachers become mentors and on an on-going basis. This goes beyond the course structure, assignments and paperwork: effective training supports mentors to further improve their practice by training them in how to deconstruct and articulate their practice, how to coach and how to support and assess trainee teachers effectively.

5. Tom Bennett and his expert group have noted the importance of mentors having relevant experience and skills in behaviour management. He has recommended that "all ITT providers should be required to train or locate mentors, tutors and coaches with demonstrable abilities in behaviour practice. It is imperative that those training in behaviour management are taught by those with impeccable skills and understanding in this area."

6. The evidence we gathered also shows that effective mentoring has wider benefits, providing professional development opportunities for mentors and building the capacity of the school as a whole. Effective mentors are outstanding teachers and subject experts, who are also skilled in explaining their own practice.

The role of the school

The sector experts we spoke to and who submitted evidence, told us that mentors should have excellent subject knowledge and a clear understanding of what constitutes high-quality teaching in a variety of contexts. They were clear that mentors play a central role in encouraging trainees and supporting their development and progress by drawing on a wide range of experiences, strategies and techniques to support trainees in meeting the Teachers' Standards. Schools also have a role to play in supporting both mentors and trainees by creating and fostering a positive environment in which mentors and trainees are able to fulfil their professional expectations. Training needs should be identified and addressed so that mentors are familiar with course structures, and they should be given sufficient time as part of their timetable to observe trainees, provide constructive feedback and to have meetings and discussions outside of the classroom to monitor progress.

Succession planning

7. We have found that the role of the mentor is crucial in the delivery of high-quality ITT. It is important that all providers have a systematic process to identify, train and develop school-based ITT mentors to support trainee teachers to develop their teaching practice and retain good teachers in the classroom for as long as possible. This, in turn, should increase the availability of experienced teachers to help ensure the steady supply of mentors and strengthen the quality of ITT within school placements.

The role of the mentor

8. A mentor should understand the course structure and the requirement of trainees to meet the Teachers' Standards. They should prioritise meetings and discussions with a trainee, monitor performance, and help develop their teaching practice and effective classroom management strategies. A mentor should also keep their subject knowledge up-to-date and have the awareness to signpost trainees to other expertise and knowledge, for example subject associations.

Case Studies

9. During our discussions with ITT providers, and while reviewing the evidence base, we found pockets of outstanding practice across a range of partnerships in England. We have also found that, since the publication of Andrew Carter's review on the quality and effectiveness of ITT, some providers have reviewed their own approach to identifying and training mentors as well as considering the package of support offered to trainee teachers to improve. This is clearly to be welcomed.

10. Ofsted, in particular, has identified a number of case studies, of different size and type of partnerships, where the quality of ITT is outstanding in each category and where the quality of mentoring is exemplary. These case studies have been showcased to give an insight into how mentoring can be prioritised within a range of different partnerships to ensure the delivery of high-quality ITT and in turn help to raise the quality of teaching and leadership within schools. Examples of outstanding mentoring in a range of ITT partnerships in England are available at Appendix 1.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

Recommendation 1:

The standards, although not statutory, should be used by school-based ITT providers to strengthen the quality of support that trainees receive whilst on school placements, to create consistency within partnerships and across the ITT system in England.

Recommendation 2:

These standards should remain in place until further notice.

Recommendation 3:

Ofsted should have regard to the standards in their inspection of ITT providers.

Recommendations 4:

In light of the proposals set out about teacher accreditation in the White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, the role of the mentor should extend beyond the initial training period to teacher accreditation and early career. Mentoring support is crucial in a system where we will move to a stronger and more challenging teacher accreditation.

About the Mentor Standards

We have developed the Mentor Standards based on the evidence we found and by reflecting on our own expertise. They are divided into four separate but related areas:

Standard 1 - Personal qualities
Establish trusting relationships, modelling high standards of practice, and empathising with the challenges a trainee faces.

Standard 2 – Teaching
Support trainees to develop their teaching practice in order to set high expectations and to meet the needs of all pupils.

Standard 3 – Professionalism
Induct the trainee into professional norms and values, helping them to understand the importance of the role and responsibilities of teachers in society.

Standard 4 – Self-development and working in partnership
Continue to develop their own professional knowledge, skills and understanding and invest time in developing a good working relationship within relevant ITT partnerships.

Using the Mentor Standards

We considered how the standards should be used and have set out how those in different roles can use the standards to enable the effective discharge of their professional duties.

Mentors should use the standards to:

- understand what is expected of them and see that it is a manageable role;
- enable self-evaluation of practice and help identify areas for further improvement;
- support the delivery of the training plan; and
- induct trainees into the school and the profession.

Aspiring mentors should use the standards to:

- help identify and seek to develop the skills and experience needed to undertake the mentoring role effectively.

Trainees should use the standards to:

- understand what support they can expect from their school-based mentor; and
- develop transferable skills, for example, in lesson observation and feedback.

ITT providers and school leaders should use the standards to:

- raise the status and recognition of the mentoring role;
- bring consistency in mentoring within any agreement made with schools in delivering ITT;
- inform the training of mentors and monitoring of their support to trainees;
- establish rigorous mentor selection processes; and
- enhance the professional development of mentors including developing or identifying training needs.

National standards for school-based initial teacher training (ITT) mentors

Preamble

A mentor is a suitably experienced teacher who has formal responsibility to work collaboratively within the ITT partnership to help ensure the trainee receives the highest quality training.

Mentors have a crucial role to play in supporting teacher trainees during their ITT through to successful teacher accreditation and beyond the early stages of their careers.

An effective mentor sets high expectations for pupil achievement, models high-quality teaching, and acts as an ambassador for the profession. ITT providers that have invested in effective mentoring will support trainees to become high-quality teachers, and build their resilience so that they are more likely to remain in teaching once their initial training is complete.

Headteachers and providers have a key role to play in the selection, monitoring and ongoing support and training for mentors.

The Standards below set out the minimum expectations for those working as school-based ITT mentor.

The Mentor Standards

Standard 1 - Personal qualities
Establish trusting relationships, modelling high standards of practice, and understand how to support a trainee through initial teacher training

The mentor should:

- Be approachable, make time for the trainee, and prioritise meetings and discussions with them;
- use a range of effective interpersonal skills to respond to the needs of the trainee;
- offer support with integrity, honesty and respect;
- use appropriate challenge to encourage the trainee to reflect on their practice; and
- support the improvement of a trainee's teaching by modelling exemplary practice in planning, teaching and assessment.

Standard 2 – Teaching

Support trainees to develop their teaching practice in order to set high expectations of all pupils and to meet their needs

The mentor should:

- support the trainee in forming good relationships with pupils, and in developing effective behaviour and classroom management strategies;

- support the trainee in developing effective approaches to planning, teaching and assessment;
- support the trainee with marking and assessment of pupil work through moderation or double marking;
- give constructive, clear and timely feedback on lesson observations;
- broker opportunities to observe best practice;
- support the trainee in accessing expert subject and pedagogical knowledge;
- resolve in-school issues on the trainee's behalf where they lack the confidence or experience to do so themselves;
- enable and encourage the trainee to evaluate and improve their teaching; and
- enable the trainee to access, utilise and interpret robust educational research to inform their teaching.

Standard 3 – Professionalism

Set high expectations and induct the trainee to understand their role and responsibilities as a teacher

The mentor should:

- encourage the trainee to participate in the life of the school and understand its role within the wider community;
- support the trainee in developing the highest standards of professional and personal conduct;
- support the trainee in promoting equality and diversity;
- ensure the trainee understands and complies with relevant legislation, including that related to the safeguarding of children; and
- support the trainee to develop skills to manage time effectively.

Standard 4 – Self-development and working in partnership

Continue to develop their own professional knowledge, skills and understanding and invest time in developing a good working relationship within relevant ITT partnerships.

The mentor should:

- ensure consistency by working with other mentors and partners to moderate judgements; and
- continue to develop their own mentoring practice and subject and pedagogical expertise by accessing appropriate professional development and engaging with robust research.

Appendix 1 - Case studies

South Farnham SCITT

Careful attention is paid by South Farnham SCITT's (SFS) programme manager, working with the headteachers of schools new to the programme, to select training mentors with the capacity to become effective in the role.

All new training mentors attend an induction that provides a basic understanding of the role of the training mentor and a clear overview of the course and its timeframes. Further sessions, in the first month of the training programme and in terms two and three, develop the crucial skills mentors require in:
- observing lessons
- giving constructive feedback
- facilitating trainees' ability to critically reflect and analyse their own teaching and its impact on children's learning
- assessing trainees' on-going progress towards the Teachers' Standards and the award of QTS

SFS has introduced paired mentoring and peer assessment during a trainee's second school experience placement. This allows the training mentor to work alongside the mentor in a trainee's second placement school. Together, they carry out observations of the trainee early in the school experience in order to moderate their assessments. The training mentor also provides support in challenging the trainee's thinking and models how to provide effective developmental feedback to the second placement school's mentor. Towards the end of the second school experience, both mentors carry out a joint final observation and, after professional discussion with the trainee, agree their assessment on the trainee and complete a joint mentor report. This has proved to be a time-efficient and highly effective way of improving the quality and effectiveness of mentoring, the progress trainees make on their placements and the accuracy of assessment of trainees in relation to the Teachers' Standards. (Ofsted, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-a-school-led-initial-teacher-education-partnership,)

Durham SCITT

Durham SCITT is a good example of a provider that has built capability and capacity in its provision, by promoting continuous improvement through effective monitoring, incisive evaluation and effective targeting of actions.

A course development committee, quality assurance committee and steering group, made up of a combination of mentors, trainees, an internal moderator and members from its partnership school and the local authority meet three times a year to monitor improvements.

This quality assurance approach and commitment from across the partnership has enhanced the development of ITT; and the quality assurance committee is robust in holding leaders and managers to account. This level of accountability contributes very effectively to sustaining existing strengths in terms of the quality of training and outcomes for trainees and driving further improvement. The committee takes responsibility for the quality assurance of the training, monitoring outcomes for trainees and shaping the

partnership's strategic direction. It analyses a wide range of data and qualitative evidence, including:

- feedback relating to trainees' performance against the [Teachers' Standards](#)
- trainees' evaluations of different aspects of their training
- the accuracy of assessment of the trainees
- the findings of internal and external monitoring and moderation processes

As a result, SCITT trainees are highly reflective, strongly committed to continually improving their practice and extremely willing to embrace the wider aspects of the teacher's role. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improvement-in-secondary-school-centred-initial-teacher-training)

Alban Federation

A particular strength of the partnership is the commitment and expertise of the key group of professional mentors. They are all highly experienced teachers, most holding leadership positions within their school. This group meets on a monthly basis and this frequency of contact is the 'glue' that holds the partnership together. At these monthly meetings:

- the progress of each trainee is reviewed

- quality assurance information is evaluated

- information is used to inform both operational and strategic planning.

Professional mentors also take responsibility for the smooth running of the partnership within their schools, including the efficient organisation of a weekly professional studies programme that runs across the partnership. This enables the training programme to draw on the strengths of all schools in the partnership and enables trainees to gain experience in each of the partnership schools during their training.

The partnership has an extensive group of experienced subject mentors, many of whom have taken several trainees 'under their wing' over the years. They have encouraged their own staff to get fully involved in mentoring. A number of current subject mentors are former trainees employed in the partnership schools. They relish the opportunity to offer the same high-quality mentoring that they experienced while training to others joining the profession.

Teachers in the partnership schools are quick to recognise the opportunities being involved in successful ITE programmes offers for their own professional development and recognise how much they gain from acting as mentors. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/todays-graduates-tomorrows-teachers-alban-federation)

Wakefield Regional Partnership for Initial Teacher Training

School-based training very coherently links with centre-based provision, as a result of the excellent communications across the partnership. The quality of mentoring across the partnership is consistently high, secured by a frequent and high level of interaction between school-based trainers, graduate teacher programme leaders, subject specialists, external consultants, and centre-based course leaders.
Through joint lesson observations and feedback to trainees with these other experts, school-based trainers quickly hone their skills, develop accuracy in their assessments,

and set short, medium and long-term targets for improvement which underpin the rapid progress trainees make.

Second-school placements, of a standard five-week duration are long enough to allow the trainee to settle and gain meaningful experiences of teaching in a different context to their lead school. Second school placements are managed by partnership leaders who endeavour to ensure that these placements significantly broaden the trainees' teaching experience. Trainees' knowledge and understanding is also significantly enhanced by a short cross-phase placement which enables them to look in detail at aspects of the phases of education prior or subsequent to those which they are being trained to teach. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-quality-and-strong-subject-knowledge-in-initial-teacher-training)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all who have taken the time to contribute to the review and offered their views and expertise by attending roundtable discussions and contributing evidence. We have had the privilege of speaking to many excellent professionals and met with trainees and teachers who have provided helpful insights on mentoring.

1. Alban Federation, The
2. Association of Teachers and Leaders (ATL), The education union
3. Bishop Grosseteste University
4. Bromley Schools Collegiate SCITT
5. Canterbury Christ Church University
6. Compton SCITT, The
7. Durham SCITT
8. Geographical Association, The
9. Harris Federation of Schools
10. Institute of Education, University of London
11. Kings College London
12. King Edward's Consortium, The
13. Middlesex University
14. Million+
15. National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT)
16. Newcastle University
17. North Tyneside SCITT
18. Ofsted
19. Pilgrim Partnership, The
20. Saffron Walden County High
21. Sheffield Hallam University
22. SITE
23. South Farnham SCITT
24. Stockton-on-Tees Teacher Training Partnership
25. Teach Northwest
26. Teach First
27. Teacher Development Trust
28. Teachers Education Advisory Group (TEAG)
29. Three Bridges Alternative Provision
30. Two Mile Ash SCITT
31. Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers, The (UCET)
32. Universities UK (UUK)
33. Universities West Midlands
34. University Campus Suffolk
35. University College London
36. University of Birmingham, The
37. University of Brighton, The
38. University of Cambridge, The

39. University of Cumbria, The
40. University of Durham, The
41. University of Hertfordshire, The
42. Wakefield Regional Partnership for Initial Teacher Training