

Training to Teach in Primary Schools



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3rd edition

Training to Teach in Primary Schools

A practical guide to School-based training and placements

Jane Medwell



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



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Preparing for school based teacher training

Learning outcomes

This chapter aims to make you aware of how your school based training experiences are organised, what is expected of you and what you can expect of those involved in your training. The chapter is focused on helping you to prepare for a setting that is new to you.

By the end of this chapter you should:

- **know how and why school based training settings and placements are selected;**
- **be able to research your school;**
- **be able to draft an email or letter to your school;**
- **know who will be closely involved in your training;**
- **be able to prepare a teaching file;**
- **be able to join a teaching union.**

Selecting settings for school based training

Some ITT routes will recruit you directly to the school where you will do much of your training, but most partnerships will have a wide range of schools to choose from. All training partnerships running ITT will ensure you have experience in more than one school. This ensures you are prepared to teach in schools generally, rather than in just one particular school. It also offers you a much wider range of staff, children and resources to learn from. You may do most of your experience in a home school and shorter placements in other schools, or do a number of placements in different schools during an undergraduate training programme.

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions on this subject.

Frequently asked questions

1. 'How will my school based training settings be selected?'

If you are training in a large partnership or university-led programme, your ITT provider will assign places in the training partnership school on the basis of the information it has been given by you and by the school. So, if you are asked to fill in a form with personal details and questions about travel and domestic arrangements, make sure you are

specific. ITT providers will accommodate you as conveniently as possible, taking into account the following factors:

- **your training needs (the age phase or school type you need, any specific targets you have to address during this placement);**
- **the range of school based training placement offers from schools in the partnership;**
- **the number of trainees who need to be accommodated;**
- **the geography and your travel arrangements;**
- **the training history of the school (you will not be placed in a school with a poor record of training or a school that has just gone into special measures);**
- **your commitments (if you are part time, not all placements will be suitable).**

School based teacher training carries the same professional demands as other jobs. You may have to make domestic arrangements to ensure you can meet those commitments. It is not reasonable to expect placements to be arranged around pet care unless you are doing a part-time course. Smaller partnerships, which involve only a few schools, may also want to take into account the need to swap trainees so that the arrangement is suitable for all schools.

2. 'Aren't all schools the same for the purposes of school based training?'

Schools decide very carefully when they can best train trainees and the classes trainees can be placed in. Schools make offers based on that information and only offer to take a trainee when it will work for all those involved, including the children. These offers are always provisional, because schools are dynamic, changing places. A school may have a change of staff or particular year group that means they cannot take the trainees they had planned for.

3. 'There is a really convenient school at the end of my road. Why can't I just go there?'

All schools offering school based training or placements have to be part of the training partnership you are being trained in. If you are training in a small SCITT provider, this may involve only two or three schools and if you are training in a university partnership it may involve several hundred schools. However, each of these schools will share the same expectations of you, make similar demands and have staff trained to support you in particular ways. The convenient school you mention may not be in the training partnership.

Alternatively, the school you mention may be in the partnership, but may want to work with trainees at a different time, not want a trainee at all this year or already have a trainee.

4. 'Why isn't the school at the end of my road in the training partnership?'

It is up to schools whether they join a training partnership. Most schools do, but this does not mean they can support placements every year. They may have a large number of NQTs or have school priorities that mean they cannot offer placements in one particular year. The school you mention may even belong to a different training partnership. Some schools are not in training partnerships. They may have school issues that mean they cannot participate, such as serious weaknesses they are addressing.

5. 'Can I choose my own school?'

Although some SCITT partnerships may recruit you directly to your base school, most partnerships will recruit trainees and negotiate their settings within the partnership. This means you usually cannot choose. Your training school needs to be in the

training partnership for the reasons discussed above. You are training to teach in all types of schools in your age phase, not just those you like. Your school must be chosen with a range of factors in mind and your training needs are the most important. This usually means you cannot choose. The only exception is where you do a SCITT scheme in a particular school but even then you will be assigned to classes in your base school and to another school with your training needs and other factors or priorities. Do not approach schools yourself unless you are asked to do so – you may cause real professional offence.

6. 'I am doing a PGCE in a large partnership and I have been assigned a school at some distance. My friend is in a school much nearer my home. Can we swap?'

Check with the person who manages the training in your partnership. It may be possible to swap. But it may not, for good reasons. Either you or your friend may have training needs that dictate your placement in those schools. It may be that those schools can offer different age phases, or examples of particularly good practice. It may be that the travel arrangements of several trainees can be accommodated using this placement pattern. If the schools already know who to expect, changing places will cause inconvenience.

7. 'For my other key stage experience, I will be doing five weeks in a school that has much more challenging behaviour than my base school. Can I refuse this offer?'

You are training to be a teacher who can teach in all Primary (or Early Years) schools. If this school is satisfactory in OFSTED terms and is part of the training partnership then it is probably a good training setting and you should take advantage of the training it offers. Remember, too, that a school in a challenging area may actually be very successful indeed and may offer you some excellent models of good practice. In this case you will have the chance to see successful behaviour policies in action and work with teachers who are used to this challenging setting – learn from the support they can give you.

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When you know which school you will be doing your school based training in, either as a base school or a placement school, there are some things you should do before you visit it. If you have been recruited by a school-led partnership, you should already have found out some information about the partnership.

Use the internet to find out as much as you can about the school:

- **Search the OFSTED site for the school's most recent OFSTED report.**
- **How old is the OFSTED report? Does this mean some things will have changed, or that another OFSTED inspection is due?**
- **What weaknesses did OFSTED identify? These may well be areas the school will be working on and may particularly benefit you.**
- **Find out whether the school has a website and see what it tells you about the school. You might also check www.ukschoolguide.com – a website directory of all schools based in the UK.**

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- **How large is the school? Does it have Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and a Nursery? If you are aiming to look at transition between key stages this may offer you particular opportunities.**
- **What are the school's strengths? Some of these may be of particular interest to you.**
- **Does the school undertake particular events like residential trips that might affect you?**

Check the location and your travel arrangements for the school

If you are travelling to school by public transport, make the journey at the appropriate time of day before your start date. You can then make sure you allow enough time on the day itself. If you will be driving to school, the same applies – check how long the journey actually takes: maps can be deceptive. When you know what your journey will be like you can make any domestic arrangements you need.

Explore the area around the school

When you get to the school take the time to explore the streets around it, ensuring that you choose a safe time to do so. Take a good look round so you can form some impressions about the lives of the children you will be teaching. You will also be able to identify what resources children will have experienced (such as shops, cafes, etc.) and what local features might be a part of your teaching (park, mosque, church, village hall, etc.).

Introduce yourself

When you know the name of your mentor (and head teacher) you may be advised to write to the school introducing yourself. Send your letter to the head teacher and the school mentor, to ensure it gets to the correct person but make sure that you get the head teacher's and mentor's names right.

Schools increasingly communicate using email and if you have been given your mentor's email, you can use this. If you have not got a specific email for the mentor it is best to write a letter first, in case your school or mentor does not use email routinely. You can always use the school's published email address to enquire for the head's and mentor's professional email addresses but do so well in advance and, if you do not get them, send a letter.

When you offer your contact details do provide as many as possible, but be aware that if you offer an email address you must check it daily. As a trainee teacher you should be thoughtful about your email address and not give your personal address if it is inappropriate. You will be given a school or university email address by your partnership to use for professional emails – but not for personal activities like shopping. You must check this email address regularly.

Your email or letter should not be too long. We recommend less than one side of A4 and definitely less than two. Make sure you keep a copy to put in your training plan or record of professional development.

Include:

- **your name, contact address, telephone number and email;**
- **degree subject and subject interests if you are a graduate or your A level subjects (or access) and subject focus if you are an undergraduate;**
- **your educational achievements;**
- **previous experience with children, including placements undertaken so far;**

- **work experience and particular skills gained from it;**
- **personal skills (such as music, computing, sports);**
- **anything you think you could contribute to the school;**
- **what you would particularly like to achieve from this placement.**

Sample letter

Norma Smith
3, Chapel Hill,
Coundon,
Newcastle
NE21 5BQ

Mrs Hughes
School Mentor
Manor Park School
Littleton Road
Newcastle

Dear Mrs Hughes,

I am writing to introduce myself before I meet you on 4 March on my first PGCE placement day.

I started the PGCE in Primary Education in September as a mature student and I have had a range of experience that I hope will be useful to me in becoming a teacher. After doing my degree in maths at Reading University, I worked for ten years as an accountant, mainly doing audits, before having my own children. My children's education introduced me to the world of children and I worked as a play assistant in a Nursery group and, for two years, as a classroom assistant in a Primary school.

On the PGCE course so far we have concentrated on the demands of teaching English, mathematics and science and I have been teaching these subjects in a Y5 class at The Larches Primary School. My first profile report was good and I have targets to work on teaching science. I hope I will be able to do some of this when I teach in your Y2 class. I am also very keen to learn about KS1 assessment. I will bring my record of training with me on my serial days and I look forward to setting first placement targets during those days.

I will be coming to school on 4 October for the first of the three serial placement days. I will arrive at around 8.15 and I hope I will be able to meet you then. If this is not an appropriate time perhaps you could let me know.

Yours sincerely

Norma Smith

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Sample email

Dear Mrs Grey,

I am writing to introduce myself as your SCITT trainee. We met very briefly at the recruitment day and I am looking forward to meeting you again on 3 September.

I am thrilled to be training as a teacher with the Rectory SCITT partnership and look forward to getting to know Oakdene School. I have had a range of experience that I hope will be useful to me in becoming a teacher. After doing my degree in history at Sheffield University, I worked overseas, teaching English, mostly in Asia, before returning to the UK to get married and have my own children. As they became more independent I began to volunteer in their school and, more recently, I was employed as a classroom assistant in Year 4, working specifically with a child with special needs. I found this role challenging and exciting and I think it has taught me a good deal about the importance of individualising teaching. I was very pleased to be accepted on the SCITT course and I have used the audit materials for English, maths and science. During the summer I worked hard to improve my subject knowledge, particularly in maths.

I will be coming to school on 3 September for the pre-term training day. I will arrive at around 8.15 a.m. and I hope I will be able to meet you then. If this is not an appropriate time perhaps you could let me know.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Green

Join a union

Join at least one of the main teaching unions (we recommend joining all of them). All offer free membership to trainees and this includes valuable insurance and advice about all sorts of professional matters. Joining a union is discussed more fully on page 36.

What to expect on your professional placement

When a school has accepted you for school based training, or even for a shorter placement, it has a commitment to ITT and is looking forward to training you during your placement. The training partnership will have a contract with the school that sets out what they can expect of you and what you can expect of the school. Look at your training programme or guidance where you will find this is set out for you. Each training partnership is different, so check your details carefully.

What to expect of your school

Some schools will be part of a SCITT partnership based around a teaching school alliance, academy chain or another cluster of schools. Others will be in partnerships of schools and universities. Some schools will work directly with universities to offer placements. The nature of your partnership affects who you will work with, but on any school

based training you will be trained by and assessed by the school staff and school mentor. Other tutors from the university, or other schools, will occasionally come out to check arrangements and moderate assessments.

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Maureen was a SCITT trainee based in a school in Coventry. Her school was in a SCITT partnership based around a teaching school alliance.

During my ITT training I did teaching experiences in two classes in my base school and also a long teaching experience in another school in our teaching school alliance. During my training the school mentor met me fortnightly to discuss my progress, set and review targets and plan the training experiences I needed. I usually planned the agenda of those meetings and took the notes, but not always – we negotiated. These meetings were the backbone of my training and I continued them with the mentor in my final school, in a slightly different format.

I also had weekly observations during teaching experience, with written feedback, mostly done by the school mentor and the class teachers of my classes. I also had observations and feedback from subject co-ordinators in the school, just as other teachers in the school did.

As a result of the observations and feedback I got, I was able to take action to improve my subject knowledge and teaching. I used these observations and discussions to pinpoint what I needed to look up or what training course would benefit me. Sometimes very simple actions, such as reading school policies or discussions with other members of staff, brought significant training benefits for me – but some of these had to be identified in discussion. I'm not convinced I'd have thought of them on my own.

I was observed once by another mentor from the partnership in both my early placements and an external moderator from the teaching school alliance came and observed me on my last teaching experience. Although it was a bit stressful, I found this reassuring and I was pleased that someone outside my immediate school was checking that my performance was comparable to others in my position.

My school mentor filled out my profiles (the assessment summaries done each term for each of my teaching experiences) and wrote the reports. I had to include these with my evidence file to get recommended for QTS.

Ruth was a final year undergraduate trainee in a large Primary school in Leamington Spa. Her school was in a full partnership.

I did my third year placement in two classes in the school (Years 1 and 2) and a fourth year placement in the Year 4 class. I had weekly meetings with my mentor at 2 pm every Friday. At these meetings we would look at three main things. Firstly, the observation and feedback from the observation that week, if there was one. Next we looked briefly at my targets for the placement and finally, we checked The Standards to see which ones to prioritise for the next few weeks. In this way we always had a number of targets we could discuss. At our meetings I often came with questions I'd collected through the week because my mentor was not always accessible during the week and I didn't like to keep asking the other staff. I found I needed to write them down.

The mentor and class teacher did observations, mostly. The head teacher did observe me once and an Ofsted inspector did too. It was nerve wracking but I felt I was more prepared than the other teachers because I was so used to having my teaching observed and commented upon. Sometimes we

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discussed the notes straight after the lesson but it wasn't always possible. Sometimes we had a quick talk after school.

My university tutor came and observed once in each class on first placement and twice in the final placement. This was useful for me because I felt I got an objective view.

My mentor did my placement reports. These go into my record of professional development (training plan) as well as to the university and show that I was successful in the placement.

Arshun was a SCITT trainee in a very small school near Plymouth. His school was in partnership with a group of schools and a university and so he had more attention from his university tutor.

I basically saw my mentor all the time because I was in her class. She was a teaching head and I worked in her class with her and with the other teacher who shared the class. We planned meetings every week but, realistically, I think we met about once a fortnight (school activity permitting) which was plenty. She was very organised and had a focus for each meeting. Usually, this was an observation done of my teaching, the pupils' progress and tracking or a particular aspect of teaching she wanted to draw to my attention, such as planning from the rolling programme or behaviour management. On a couple of occasions we scrapped the agenda just to talk about behaviour management because I was preoccupied by it then. I also had a specific meeting about a task the university had set me during this term.

I was formally observed, with written notes and lesson plans, by the other teacher in the class three times in the five weeks I was in the school. I also had one observation from the university tutor who discussed it with me and helped me to identify points to improve and things I should do to help me keep developing. It was helpful to have their insights and my tutor identified things I hadn't thought of.

When it came to assessment, the mentor wrote a report which she discussed with the tutor. They talked to each other and to me in preparing these and there weren't any surprises.

What to expect of your school mentor

The Teachers' Standards emphasise that you must 'develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support' and 'take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues' (Teachers' Standard 8). This standard involves a combination of personal responsibility for your professional development, good communication with colleagues and the ability to act on advice. This is the basis of a mentoring relationship that will be your chief vehicle of learning through professional placement. The school mentor will be a teacher who has undertaken training and takes a lead role in dealing with trainees in the school. Your mentor is crucial to your training on professional placement. In some schools your mentor may also be your class teacher, but often the mentor is a senior member of staff who can provide the sort of objective support that we all need from time to time. The role of the school mentor will vary depending on the type of partnership the school is engaged in, but in general you can expect the following.

Your mentor will:

- **be your main point of contact with the school;**
- **know the school well, including the strengths of different members of staff, resources and opportunities;**

- **meet you on a regular basis to help you to set targets, evaluate progress, and identify experiences you want to have;**
- **know the Teachers' Standards and how to help you demonstrate them;**
- **provide a link with the university or lead school, if one is involved in your training course;**
- **be aware of your workload and help you to plan it effectively so that you can meet your training needs;**
- **observe some of your teaching and give feedback;**
- **assess and report on your progress. The mentor is usually responsible for assessing you towards the end of the placement and filling out a full report or profile of your progress against the standards so far. In some partnerships the mentor may do this in conjunction with a tutor from a university or college;**
- **be trained, know what to expect of trainees and pass information about trainees to other members of staff.**

These roles are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

Contacts

Your mentor will know the dates and expectations of your school based training before you arrive. If you are doing a placement outside your base school, he or she may also have seen previous reports about your teaching or assessments of progress against The Standards so far and will have limited knowledge about you.

The mentor will also have a guidance for the specific phase of your school based training or placement. However, it is a good idea to discuss the school based training requirements clearly at the beginning of your time in the school. Mentors can help you to complete school-based tasks you may have or work you have to do for an assignment. Although they will know about these in advance you must discuss them with your mentor and plan when to complete them.

In school your mentor is the person who can provide details of the school policies, staff, etc. (see Chapter 6). Your mentor can also arrange training experiences you might need: perhaps observing a particular teacher who is good at something you are trying to get to grips with, or arranging a demonstration or discussion with an IT co-ordinator. If there is something you particularly need to be involved in, such as National Tests or report writing, you should always discuss it with the mentor, who will help you to make arrangements.

On your first day you should arrange to meet your mentor before school.

Planning, teaching assessment and recording

Your mentor will agree a timetable with you. This is not quite as specific as it sounds because of your developing needs and the pace of school life. At first your timetable will involve a great deal of observation. As you learn more about the class the amount of teaching will increase.

Your mentor will routinely plan for your involvement in the teaching of English, maths and science. Where you have targets that involve other subjects you will need to discuss these with your mentor and class teacher to ensure that, if they are not being taught in your class this term, you can go to another class.

Observation of your teaching

Mentors will manage and participate in observation of your teaching but they may not do it all themselves. Class teachers and subject co-ordinators may observe you teaching sessions and give you written and verbal feedback. Discuss who will observe you and when.

Regular review meetings

Your mentor will meet regularly with you to discuss:

- **observations and feedback;**
- **the children's progress;**
- **your performance against your targets;**
- **setting more specific targets;**
- **your school based tasks (if you have any);**
- **your performance against the Teachers' Standards.**

Assessment

As your school based training or placement progresses your mentor will usually take the lead in writing a report about your progress. Different courses give these reports different names (profiles, reports, assessments, etc.). This report will be linked to the Teachers' Standards and will contain judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of your teaching and subject knowledge based on the evidence provided by observation feedback sheets, mentor meetings, discussion, observations by other staff and the contents of your files. There may be an interim report about halfway through the term or placement. The report will be read by you, the mentor and any course staff involved in your training and will be the basis of target-setting for subsequent placement, further course-based work or for your NQT year.

What to expect of the class teacher

Throughout your school based training the class teacher will provide most of your day-to-day support. At the beginning of any placement, you will be observing your class teacher very closely to see how he or she works with the children, what the rules and expectations of classroom behaviour are and how your teacher rewards and enforces these expectations. Your first job is to be aware of these things and to get to know the names of the children in the class. You also need to know about your class teacher's routines and commitments in the school.

When you work with your class teacher he or she will be responsible for:

- **showing you class rules and procedures (often by example);**
- **modelling good practice in teaching;**
- **helping you to analyse and reflect on your practice;**
- **focusing your attention on pupils' learning;**
- **discussing your planning so that it meets the school's needs as well as yours, and helping you to pitch it right.**

Your class teacher may also:

- **observe lessons on an agreed basis, possibly with your mentor or head teacher;**
- **give you written and oral feedback on your lessons;**
- **help you to develop self-evaluation strategies;**
- **monitor your files.**

Your class teacher is your colleague, your model and your adviser. He or she will have a unique teaching style and by observing it you can learn valuable lessons. As you progress in your practice, the teacher will share lesson planning and share the teaching as well as supporting you in planning and teaching lessons.

What to expect of course tutors

The role of the course tutor, from a university or another partnership, varies enormously from course to course and they have different titles – advisers, link tutors, visiting tutors, etc. You will need to be sure you know the structure of your course. Roles of the course tutors in school based training may include:

- **ensuring your setting meets your training needs;**
- **target-setting and approval;**
- **reviewing progress and targets;**
- **visiting the placement to observe your teaching and giving feedback;**
- **offering support for subject knowledge improvement;**
- **offering advice about teaching techniques;**
- **moderating mentor assessment and grading of your performance;**
- **offering support for the mentor in your training and assessment.**

Target-setting or approval

In all courses you will be expected to set targets for your teaching and agree these with either a course tutor or your school mentor. This is part of your personal professional development. These targets are discussed in more detail later, but you will be expected to link them to the Teachers' Standards. As you progress through your placement you will modify and add to your targets as you achieve some of them. See target-setting (Chapter 7).

Reviewing progress and targets

When you have completed a period of school based training or placement you need to review your progress against the targets you set and the Teachers' Standards. Use your training report, any written feedback you have had, your file of plans and evaluations. Your course tutor (or mentor) may meet you to help you review the placement: if so, make sure you go to the meeting prepared. Make a frank assessment of whether or not you have met your targets and how well you have done. Identify the standards you still have to address. Consider your strengths and your weaknesses. As well as identifying targets, your tutors can help you identify what you should do to meet them. By engaging in this type of review you are addressing the standards outlined in the Preamble to the Teachers' Standards and also Standard 8, by acting professionally to improve your performance.

Visiting the school, observing your teaching and giving feedback

Course tutors from a university or from other schools in the partnership will usually arrange to visit you on placement at least once. There will probably be a number of reasons for the visit. They will want to monitor:

- that you are well placed and that the placement is meeting your needs;
- that you are making progress on your placement by building up your planning, teaching and assessment experience;
- that you are reviewing and achieving your targets;
- that you and your mentor are making the arrangements necessary to meet your targets;
- that you are doing any tasks you have been asked to do;
- that you are developing confidence;
- that your mentor is happy with your progress.

Support for subject knowledge improvement and teaching techniques

A visiting tutor may be able to suggest experiences you need to develop your teaching or subject knowledge. For instance, you might need to begin to teach the mental/oral section of a maths lesson, to observe National Tests in another year group or to discuss the Early Years Foundation Profile with the Reception teacher. These arrangements can be made with your mentor.

Moderating mentor assessment and grading of your performance

On most courses, a tutor will visit to observe a lesson you are teaching. The tutor may do a joint observation with the mentor or teacher. This serves two purposes. First, the mentor and course tutor will offer you written feedback to assist your target-setting. Second, a joint observation will also have moderation value in the placement, ensuring that the tutor and mentor share opinions about your practice and expectations about what you should be achieving.

Support for the mentor

Course tutors will see many teachers and trainees teaching. They can help mentors to pinpoint the most effective experiences for you.

In some courses you may find these course roles split so that a personal tutor helps you set targets whilst an advisor visits you in school. Be sure you check the role of the course tutors in your placement for your particular course.

What the school is expecting of you

The school is committed to ITT so they are looking forward to your placement. The Preamble of the Teachers' Standards (2013) tells you what is expected of you as a teacher:

Teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. Teachers act with honesty and integrity; have strong subject knowledge; keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and are self-critical; forge positive professional relationships; and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils.

This is a demanding list, and you need to show that you are striving to achieve it. Your mentor will be looking for a professional attitude: most mentors would cite this as your most important quality. What is a professional attitude? It is the hallmark of a professional (of any type) that they aim to review and improve their work, develop their skills and abilities and take responsibility for their work and professional development. In addition:

- **You need to be enthusiastic and committed to your chosen training. Enthusiasm and commitment produce positive responses from staff and pupils alike.**
- **You need to show your enthusiasm and commitment by being well prepared and working hard. This will earn the respect and support of your colleagues and make your lessons go well. Nothing upsets colleagues more than a trainee who is constantly trying to avoid work or leave early.**
- **You need to be willing to ask for help and information in a polite and friendly manner, and to choose an appropriate person and moment to do so.**
- **You need to be sensitive to the stresses that all teachers occasionally feel – five minutes before a tricky lesson is not the time to ask the teacher of that lesson for help.**
- **You need to be reasonably self-critical and able to accept criticism and advice as a learning experience. No one learns without some less-than-perfect lessons. No one will expect you to have all the answers.**
- **You need to feel you are directing your training and balancing your needs with the needs of the teachers and children. No one will respect you if, at the end of a placement, you have not done specific tasks because you 'didn't get round to it'.**

Evidence of a professional attitude comes from a number of signs that you give in the early contacts with the school. Some of these are mentioned in Part Two of the Teachers' Standards: 'Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality' (Teachers' Standards, Part Two, p.14). Appropriate dress is important. Different schools have different codes of dress for staff and these are usually unspoken rules. On your first visit it is worth being smart, but practical. Look at how the other teachers dress (perhaps on the school website). You will be setting an example to the children on behalf of the school and representing the school's values. Do not dress in a way that might upset children, parents or colleagues. Avoid immodest clothes and unusual hairstyles and remove obvious piercings. You will need to consider certain aspects of appearance for health and safety reasons. Long hair needs to be held back so that you have a clear all-round view, otherwise you cannot do the job. Your nails need to be short enough to help children in, say, gymnastics, without spiking them. Dress like a member of the profession you want to join, but do not feel you have to be super smart or purchase a whole new wardrobe.

Punctuality is also extremely important. Although the children will probably arrive between 8.30 and 8.55 a.m., the staff will be arriving at school much earlier. If you arrange to arrive early at school in order to meet your mentor, he or she will have set aside some time for you. That time is precious so make sure you are there and ready to make the most of it.

When you begin your teacher training, you sign up to Part Two of the Teachers' Standards, which define the behaviour and attitudes that set the required standard of conduct throughout your career.

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- *treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position*
- *having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions*
- *showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others*
- *not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs*
- *ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.*

(Teachers' Standards, 2013, Part Two, p. 14)

These requirements affect you from your very first day in school and circumscribe the ways you interact with pupils and the views you express. Though almost all trainee teachers understand this in their face-to-face relationships, social media is also important and you are responsible for your internet conduct. This means you must check your internet and social media presence regularly (and you may have done this before you applied for teacher training). You must make sure that you present yourself, through words and pictures, in ways that are acceptable to colleagues, parents and pupils. Respecting proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position means you follow the school social media and communications policy. Usually, this means that your pupils and parents should not be 'friends' on personal social media sites. You should not give pupils your home mobile number and you should use your school or university email address for professional correspondence.

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As part of inducting Paula into a KS2 placement, her school searched her name on the internet. Her social media pages were accessible and senior teachers saw her posts. Unfortunately, Paula had expressed her views about her Polish ex-boyfriend in ways the Head saw as racist and offensive and Paula was asked to leave the school.

Confidentiality is another important professional characteristic. As a trainee teacher you must show the same degree of confidentiality that is expected of other teachers. This means that what happens in school is confidential within the school. You can usually talk and write about school events within the training partnership. You would certainly want to do so in course essays, for example, but even then names of children, staff and schools should be disguised. You need to express yourself professionally and not make unsupported, sweeping or uninformed judgements.

In discussions within school you should avoid criticising your fellow teachers and gossiping about colleagues. This is just as important outside the staff group. Staff rooms contain a good many adults who are not members of school staff – visiting

parents, advisers, inspectors, etc., and you need to remember this. You should not discuss school inappropriately with friends or relations. The perils of gossip extend to social media. You must be very circumspect about what you share and who can see it. It is unprofessional to discuss school matters, teachers or pupils online and you can do untold damage to colleagues, teachers and pupils with an unguarded post or tweet.

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The importance of confidentiality was brought home to Christine, a third-year BA student, in an uncomfortable way. Christine had undertaken a placement in the school the previous term and had discussed it with a friend whose child attended the placement school. At some point Christine unwittingly expressed a negative opinion of the teaching skills of Mr X. The following term Christine's friend approached the school and asked that her son should not be put into Mr X's class because of what she had heard. Naturally, the head teacher of the school was very upset. She felt that Christine had acted unprofessionally and damaged the reputation of the school. Christine was aghast and realised that she had, unintentionally, acted extremely unprofessionally. This was certainly not the sort of evidence of team working and collaboration she wanted to accumulate towards meeting The Standards. She could only write apologising to the school and learn a hard lesson.

All this seems a tall order at first, but as long as you go to school positive and well prepared, you will find your school welcoming. Your school has the right to expect you to start your school based training with:

- a developing knowledge of the Teachers' Standards against which you will be assessed;
- an informed knowledge about your course of training – you should have read your course and placement details on the website or in a handbook;
- a clear idea of what your targets are for this period of school based training. (On first placements or right at the start of a school based course of training this is much harder than in subsequent placements because everything is a target. Do not be afraid to discuss it with your mentor and set narrower targets such as specific observations or taking parts of lessons.)
- a clear picture of what you want to get out of this block of school based training, not just from the point of view of the course and the standards, but on a personal level;
- an expectation of participating in assessment and planning meetings;
- an expectation of participating in staff meetings and training days, although you may not have much to contribute at first;
- your training plan or record of professional development;
- a teaching file.

REFLECTIVE TASK

Prepare your documentation for school based training. You will usually have a teaching file (sometimes called a placement or teaching practice file) and a file about your professional development such as a professional development plan or record of professional development. You might be asked to combine these.

Prepare your teaching file

This is a file that you will use day to day to hold notes on school policies, plans, evaluations, assessments, etc. At first your teaching file will not contain a great deal but it will indicate that you have given some thought to your school based training and begun your preparation. When setting up a teaching file you need to read the course documentation very carefully and think about your targets. This will help you to decide the sections you will need in a file and how to arrange them. Before you get to school a teaching file may simply have the following:

- **your details;**
- **details of the school (including OFSTED reports);**
- **file dividers for various sections (school policies, medium-term plans, weekly plans, daily plans, lesson evaluations, assessments, notes of mentor meetings, etc.);**
- **course details, including relevant sections of the course information;**
- **any forms needed for this block of school based training, possibly as part of your record of professional development or training plan.**

This is not in-depth material, but it is a strong indicator of your attitude. A trainee who arranges this before the school based training starts sends out strong messages of positive professional values, such as organisation. It shows you are committed and willing to work hard.

Prepare your training plan file (or professional development profile)

This document will have your background details in it, the Teachers' Standards and will develop to form a full record of your training. This file will probably be where you record the targets you set for this block of school based training with the mentor or link tutor. At the start of a period of school based training or placement you should expect to spend some time reviewing this record. Use the format you are given as part of your training to:

- **identify what you have already achieved in relation to the standards;**
- **identify key standards which you aim to meet.**

You will discuss your record with your mentor at the school of the block of school based training or at an agreed point (usually termly).

You will do a good deal more with this file when you have finished this block of school based training, when you may want to put lesson plans, lesson observations, assessments and photographs into it.

Union membership

Most teachers belong to one of the main teaching unions (contact details on page 38). These are trade unions that negotiate on behalf of their members on issues such as pay and conditions. However, the unions also offer a wider range of additional services. Most of the unions produce materials especially for trainee teachers and NQTs. These range from advice about classroom management, to tips for getting a job. The publications are often free to trainees and many trainees have found them invaluable. The unions also

offer services such as insurance cover as part of membership. Each package is different but may provide insurance cover for:

- **personal accidents;**
- **hospitalisation;**
- **personal property (including spectacles);**
- **malicious damage to motor vehicles on school or college premises.**

The membership may also include the union’s legal services in the case of any dispute and the services of the union in agreeing your pay package when you take up a job.

There are also additional benefits such as:

- **discount shopping;**
- **life assurance and investments;**
- **mortgage facilities;**
- **legal services;**
- **credit card facilities;**
- **personal loans;**
- **motor insurance;**
- **motor breakdown and recovery services;**
- **travel facilities;**
- **tax recovery services;**
- **magazines;**
- **pocket diaries, calendars and pens, etc.**

We strongly recommend you join at least one union before going into school for the insurance benefits, as well as the excellent advice. Membership is usually free for trainees and some NQTs. Each union has slightly different policies and, eventually, you will want to be a member of a union that represents your view but, as a trainee, you do not have to make a final decision about which union to join because you can join them all. The university or partnership running your course may well have arranged contact with the unions. If not, they can be contacted at the URLs listed below.

The unions will have local branches and you may find that in many schools all the staff belong to one union but you can decide about this when you are an NQT.

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I only joined the unions because they were all there in the university one day and they were giving out good leaflets and pens and I really didn't expect to need them. On my very first term training in school my car was badly scratched in the school car park. On school based training you are quite tense anyway and I found it really upsetting. I had already had a recent insurance claim and risked losing my no claims bonus if I claimed on the car policy. I also didn't want to make a fuss in school or draw attention to myself. The union said I was covered through them and they paid out for the repairs with very little effort on my part. Since then I have had the magazines and booklets they send, which have been good, especially in helping me to prepare interviews. I also consulted them about my starting salary. I will retain membership of all three unions this (my NQT) year then decide which to go for when I have to pay.

Nahid, NQT

A SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Your school based training schools are chosen with your training needs and circumstances in mind and should include a range of experiences for you.
- You should do a little research about your school before you start.
- You should write to your school and introduce yourself as a professional, enthusiastic trainee.
- Your mentor is a member of the school staff who will know about your training and will work to support you through your school based training or placement.
- Your class teacher will be your principal model of good practice and will teach with you.
- Course tutors (if you have them) will participate in your training, moderating, offering advice and training.
- From the very beginning of your school based training you must act professionally. This means having a professional attitude, being punctual, maintaining confidentiality and dressing appropriately.
- We strongly suggest you join at least one teaching union before beginning school based training.

RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES

Association of Teachers and Lecturers. ATL, formerly the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association (AMMA), is a fully democratic, TUC-affiliated trade union and professional association. www.atl.org.uk

Educational Institute of Scotland. The EIS is the largest organisation of teachers and lecturers in Scotland representing around 80 per cent of the profession in nursery, primary, special, secondary and further and higher education. www.eis.org.uk/

National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers. NASUWT is one of the largest teaching unions and the only one to organise in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. NASUWT has members in all sectors of education and represents teachers in all roles including heads and deputies. www.teachersunion.org.uk

National Union of Teachers. The NUT is the largest of all the teaching unions. It is a professional association and a trade union that also provides access to a variety of conferences and reference materials for teachers and staff within the education sector. Membership for students is free. www.teachers.org.uk/index.php

Professional Association of Teachers. This independent trade union caters for all workers in education. Founded in 1970 it has approximately 35,000 members. www.pat.org.uk