



The National Association of  
School-Based Teacher Trainers

## **NASBTT Opinion Piece**

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### **Hopes and fears for the ITT sector in 2019**

Well, 2018 went by in a flash, didn't it? It really doesn't feel like 12 months since we welcomed Damian Hinds as the new education secretary and soon after published our response to the Department for Education (DfE) consultation on Strengthening Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Improving Career Progression for Teachers.

Yet it is the outcomes of this consultation which have set out enormous possibilities for the teacher training landscape and is the main reason I look forward to 2019 with such great anticipation. That is not to say the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) sector is expecting a smooth ride for the year ahead, nor do I think there will not be many more challenges to face as we all seek to address the issues facing schools on recruitment.

Here are my Top 10 hopes and fears for ITT in 2019:

#### **1. Overcoming political instability**

The Strengthening QTS and Improving Career Progression for Teachers consultation commitments will potentially revolutionise the early career support offered to teachers and help to make the profession attractive once more. However, we must not let current political instability disrupt the transformative plans for an entitlement to professional development for all early career teachers through the Early Career Framework (ECF).

#### **2. Formalising high-quality mentoring**

Mentoring is crucial to making the ECF work. In a 'bluesky' world, every school would have a lead teacher educator in the same way as we have a SENDCo and a Safeguarding Lead. This would be a position on a par with those two roles and would be rewarded and valued as such. The role would not heap all responsibility for mentoring on to that one person's shoulders but in the same way as a safeguarding lead would, their remit would be to educate the entire staff on mentorship and its importance. The development of early career staff should be everyone's responsibility, not simply that of their named mentor.

#### **3. Paying teachers what they deserve**

To make teaching a desirable profession within a competitive (and shrinking) graduate market, the government needs to invest in attractive salaries and career pathways for teachers. Whilst the evidence may say that teachers do not enter (or leave) the profession because of money, the research is always focused on teachers – who are self-selecting in that they have chosen teaching even though the pay is relatively low. What we do not know is how many amazing

people out there have never even considered teaching because the salary is too low but just might consider it if the pay was actually reflective of its importance and standing in a community.

#### 4. A shift in recruitment priorities

Government teacher recruitment policies should aim for the 'brightest and the best' and not simply 'bums on seats', and the DfE must put its trust in local providers to ascertain local need and set their recruitment practices accordingly. As a sector, we are too focused on numbers on a spreadsheet, and similarly policies need to recognise the importance of education for the whole child rather than focusing on academic results to the detriment of everything else.

#### 5. Entry requirement headaches

The removal of the ability to set prior school experience as an entry requirement is leading to School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and School Direct providers reporting that they are experiencing early withdrawals as a direct result. An increasing number of student teachers are having anxiety and mental health issues, in part because for an increasing number, their very first experience in school is now often as a fully-blown trainee, already committed to a training programme, and this is clearly not good for anyone at a time when ITT providers are required to reduce workload.

#### 6. Scrapping skills tests

Changes to skills tests offered great candidates the chance to access courses without an arbitrary lock on entry for the sake of a few marks on a flawed testing system and uncapped allocations allowed local providers to truly serve the needs of their local communities. Going forward, we hope skills tests are scrapped once and for all and replaced with on-programme assessment which is genuinely developmental.

#### 7. Supporting providers in new Ofsted framework

There is definitely a change coming in the Ofsted inspection framework in that there will be a significant focus on subject knowledge and curriculum planning for Initial Teacher Education (ITE). I have heard concerns being raised in some quarters about the ability of small SCITT providers to offer the breadth and depth of subject knowledge that is required. However, these providers are uniquely placed to serve the needs of small, and often isolated, communities and have demonstrated time and again that they can offer high quality training to their cohorts. NASBTT will continue to support all members, irrespective of size and the links we are forging with subject and phase organisations will be key to ensuring equity of provision across a range of organisations.

#### 8. Developing teacher educators

Whilst most of the rhetoric is around in-school recruitment and retention, there has been little corresponding growth in professional development opportunities for those responsible for the education of teachers. There has never been a more important time for investment in SCITT and School Direct providers and, especially, teacher educators whose remit it is, ultimately, to provide schools with high-quality candidates. We already offer a suite of Teacher Educator Programmes to develop the knowledge and skills of those people working in schools who support and educate other teachers, including newly-appointed mentors, coaches, CPD co-ordinators, CPD facilitators and teaching school managers.

#### 9. Recognising strength in collaboration

We need to ensure there is continued support for partnership working and a change in the dialogue from schools-led or HE teacher training providers to a recognition that both are valuable and both are needed for a vibrant, choice-driven marketplace. For example, NASBTT and UCET already work closely together, and if there are plans to develop NPQ-style qualifications for teacher educators we are both excellently placed to be providers of this.

## 10. Funding (yes, it all comes down to that)

Schools remain concerned about the costs of the ECF, which could really be a game-changer. However, without the resources necessary, this initiative could fail to deliver its promises. We must avoid the creating on a new and expensive structure to support the ECF when ITT providers are already ideally placed to develop a network of highly trained, expert mentors who could be deployed into schools. Again, this will need funding and genuine recognition to be given to the role within schools.

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NASBTT is a registered charity committed to promoting high-quality schools-led programmes of training, education and professional development of teachers.

NASBTT represents the interests of schools-led teacher training provision in relation to the development and implementation of national policy developments. Our members include SCITT providers, School Direct Lead Schools, Teaching Schools, HEIs as well as a range of other organisations involved in the education and professional development of teachers. We have 195 members representing almost 7,000 individual trainees.

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