



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

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COVID-19: “ITT providers and trainees are pulling out all the stops to make things work – their story must be told”

It is just over two weeks since the government announced that schools would be closed to the majority of pupils for a prolonged period of time. Whilst media attention has inevitably, and rightly, focused on the implications for children and home-schooling, an untold story is the efforts of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers who have responded to confirmation that they will be able to award QTS at the end of a programme in the normal way, based on the trainee’s trajectory at the point their programme was interrupted.

In only a matter of days ITT providers have had to completely change their delivery models for current trainees as well as overhauling all processes for recruitment and interviews – and they are pulling out all the stops to make things work. I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight what they and their trainees are doing during these challenging times to ensure that we continue to provide a flow of new teachers into the profession by shining a spotlight on their hard work, which goes above and beyond the norm.

The crisis has meant that significant resources and energies have been diverted to support their current cohort of trainees through a very difficult time. Not only have they had to invent and deliver an entirely new, distance learning programme of ITT (quite literally overnight), but they are also managing the mental health and wellbeing of trainees, trying to support schools within their partnerships, and managing their own staff and their reactions to the pandemic.

Like all of us, they are also managing families and vulnerable relatives, the adjustment to the new ways we are all being asked to live our lives and massive adaptations to the way they are being asked to work and communicate. On top of the personal and professional pressures they face themselves, they are relied upon to provide additional support to the trainees, who in turn are dealing with all the same issues.

Assessment processes are also having to be reinvented at extremely short notice and there is a lot of anxiety across the sector about getting this right and making it fair. Additionally, without formal guidance yet being published on how to manage those trainees who are not on a trajectory to meet the Teachers’ Standards, providers are coming under significant pressure from those weaker trainees who are either on a cause for concern or at risk of being placed on one as they do not have answers to their (understandable) questions about what will happen to them.

Providers are also recreating their recruitment processes at extremely short notice and this is often proving to be extremely complex and time consuming. They are being innovative in how they manage this (invigilating testing via video conference facilities, for example) but all of this takes a lot of time and energy and generates significant anxiety as normal recruitment processes which ensure we get the right people in front of our children, such as observing applicants’ interactions with children, cannot be incorporated during this unusual time.

Despite all these considerable hurdles to jump during this unprecedented situation, in the past week I have been hearing of many incredible 'on the ground' responses from ITT providers – just a handful of which I am sharing with you here:

“One of our primary trainees has made some PE videos for YouTube and a secondary trainee has been involved in making a short animated book for young children to explain the need for isolation. More widely, in terms of our approach to dealing with school closures and how we have adapted our provision, essentially this has been lots of regular email updates, online webinars to keep in touch and continue learning, and lots of individual phone calls and emails. An amended and very flexible set of expectations keep everyone feeling a sense of purpose and identity.”

Patrick Garton, Teaching School and SCITT Director, Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance

“Many of our trainees are supporting schools with online lessons/video conferencing teaching and helping the NHS volunteering. I am tracking all of this and therefore programmes for 60 trainees is very much on an individual basis. However, I have set some tasks they must all do for QTS i.e. home-school lesson planning and sequence planning for schemes of work. We are going to share the best ones for each subject for parents on our Facebook account. Central training and subject studies continue online, as we are using exam board resources to support marking and feedback. We have one meeting a week to discuss research on the Teachers' Standards. They will record all of this in their evidence.”

Samantha Torr, Secondary Director, Colchester Teacher Training Consortium

“In the light of exceptional circumstances with respect to the Covid-19 situation, the safety and wellbeing of the SCITT community and partner schools were our highest priorities as we rapidly implemented reasonable alternatives to replace face-to-face sessions and school placements. The following programme adjustments were established to support our Associate Teachers (ATs) in being able to demonstrate that they continue to be on track to meet the Teachers' Standards and so secure their award of QTS:

- A clear programme of professional enquiries that relate to the knowledge that underpins the Teachers' Standards.
- A subject knowledge programme, so that ATs continue to develop their own curriculum understanding and the appreciation of the significance of this.
- Weekly group tutorials to share teaching experiences so that each AT widens their understanding, by contributing to discussions and learning from others.
- Weekly Zoom-teach opportunities. These enable our ATs to continue to develop their practice and pedagogy. We have used a metacognitive framework called Thinking Moves: <https://dialogueworks.co.uk/thinking-moves/>. Each week the ATs either teach in relation to a move and a subject or co-analyse the teaching of others, so that they continue to develop both their teaching and their reflective capabilities.
- One-to-one contact from PTs to ATs each week with a focus on wellbeing and progress through set tasks from the Zoom Tutorial and Adjusted Timetable Guide timetable.
- Support for the final assignment included in the weekly online group tutorial and the revised reading list to include online sources.
- Alternative enquiries have been provided for Lesson Study, Switch on Reading, Post Key Stage experience, Phonics and Safeguarding.
- ATs are maintaining PSHE, Behaviour and Ethics enquires online and in discussion with their tutor and colleagues.
- A new enquiry was created for British Values.
- Specialism tutors crafted enriched curriculum knowledge using online group work and associated tasks.”

Diane Swift, Director, Keele and North Staffordshire Teacher Education

The Voice of School-Based Teacher Training

Never have we needed teachers more than now and never has the hard work and dedication of ITT providers been more vital in protecting the flow of entrants to the profession. None of us can know what the world, and our schools, may look like over the coming weeks and months but what I can confidently say is that the ITT sector will continue to rise to the challenge, surpassing all expectation and continuing to ensure our children have the very best teachers in front of them (or at the other end of a computer!).

Emma Hollis is Executive Director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT)

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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 over 200 members representing more than 10,000 individual trainees.

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