



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

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Teaching Teachers during COVID-19 report: NASBTT statement

“Providers have done everything within their gift to offer support and guidance through this difficult time”

NASBTT has responded to the publication of Ofsted’s Teaching Teachers during COVID-19 research report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-teachers-during-covid-19/teaching-teachers-during-covid-19>.

Executive Director Emma Hollis said: “Firstly, and very positively, we are delighted that the hard work of ITT providers during the course of the pandemic has been highlighted in the report. The support providers have given to trainees has been recognised as going ‘above and beyond’, and something we have directly witnessed with our members over the past 14 months. We are equally delighted that our experiences of providers finding innovative ways to support trainees during an unprecedented period of time has been clearly identified by the research team.

It has also been our experience that some aspects of ITT provision have been strengthened by the shift to new ways of working. The report makes positive references to “deeper and more connected thinking about the ITE curriculum” as well as “improved guidance and support {and}...wider access to ITE curriculum content across the partnership”. This is reflective of the ‘Covid keepers’ we have been exploring with our members and signals a new approach to some aspects of ITT in the future.

At a time where broadening access to provision has never been more important, we are also pleased to note the recognition given to providers’ efforts to support access for trainees with a wide range of personal circumstances have been acknowledged. We are confident that such innovations will be embraced going forward, with face-to-face methodologies being retained where these have been shown to be more impactful.

The focus on mental health and wellbeing has also been recognised in the report and this is an area which we believe has been particularly effective for providers. With reports around the decline of the mental health of the teaching workforce presenting worrying findings (<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/mental-health-decline-schools-could-push-more-teachers-leave>) it is promising that ITT providers have made this a central part of the offer they are able to give to beginning teachers who will be entering the workplace at a time of great uncertainty.

The impact of the pandemic was, inevitably, always going to be felt keenly by trainees who have limited access to classroom practice. We are pleased the report has identified that providers have made their best efforts to mitigate this disruption and have done everything within their gift to offer support and guidance through this difficult time. We are clear that there will be unique challenges for Early Career Teachers (ECTs) entering the workplace this September and it will be important for employing schools to appreciate these unique needs and ensure that, with the

support of the ECF, they are tailoring support accordingly. Despite some challenges for this year's ECTs, it is heartening to note that the report has highlighted some ways in which this cohort are at a unique advantage to others – including their immersion in online teaching and learning environments which has well-prepared them for the possibilities for blended learning and given them additional time and space for reflection on key principles of how pupils learn.

We do, however, have to take issue with the report's conclusions that too few partnerships have a sufficiently ambitious ITE curriculum and too many partnerships are overly reliant on the experiences that trainees gain through placements to provide ITE curriculum content in subjects and phases.

Our experience of working exceptionally closely with providers over the past 18 months through conferences, workshops, one-to-one support and networking opportunities has been that providers have taken the introduction of the Core Content Framework very seriously and are working hard to ensure that their revised curriculum materials fully meet and exceed these new requirements. We have seen excellent practice in the development of highly ambitious ITT curriculums, many of which we have collated and shared publicly. The introduction of an entirely new curriculum expectation, if it is to be done thoughtfully and to a high standard, is always going to take time. We must also not lose sight of the fact that the ITE Inspection Framework was due to be introduced from September 2020, which fell in the eye of the Covid-19 storm. Despite this, the work we have been doing with providers has not lost sight of the importance of curriculum design and implementation.

On the perceived over-reliance on school placements for learning the curriculum, Government policy decisions, made explicit in the ITT Criteria have, over a period of more than a decade, directed providers to ensure that school placements are at the heart of any provision. It is a central part of the unique system of teacher training that we enjoy in England (and which is due to be exported globally with the introduction of iQTS) that *real* and sustained experiences of *live* classrooms are a core feature of any programme of ITT. The quality and consistency of school placements are a perennial challenge for ITT providers who have, variously, been tasked with working with schools in challenging circumstances, supporting employment-based routes into ITT and ensuring a breadth of school experiences for trainee teachers. These are challenging priorities to balance and it is our experience (backed up by the outcomes of Ofsted's previous inspections) that providers have been able to rise to these challenges over successive inspection frameworks and through successive adaptations to government policy.

The positive note in the Ofsted report about the ability of the sector (and in particular the school-based sector) to secure placement opportunities for their trainees despite the tremendous pressure on schools throughout the pandemic is testament to the success of ITT providers' relationships with their partnership schools."

-ENDS-

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 12,000 individual trainees.

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