ITT setting/school placements 2020/21: provider approaches and work in progress
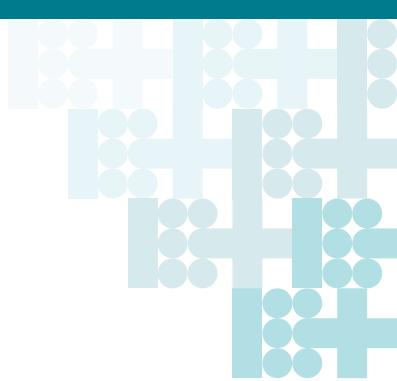
Introduction

This toolkit has been developed by the sector, for the sector, and is intended to act as a helpful guide for ITT providers. It sets out ways in which providers are approaching setting/school placements in the current COVID-19 context. It builds on the earlier placement paper published in July 2020, by providing additional ideas and approaches.

Please note that the links within the document were correct at the point of publication. The links are for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute endorsement by the authors.

BACKGROUND

To ensure providers can use flexibility and creativity to deliver training to this year's cohort of trainees, the Department for Education has removed the following expectations from the ITT criteria:

- that they have met the Teacher's Standards across the full age and ability range of training (C2.1);
- that training programmes cover no fewer than four school years (C2.2);
- that practical teaching experience takes place wholly or mainly in England (this remains subject to the approval of parliament) (C2.3);
- and that trainees train to teach in at least two schools (C2.4).

This document is intended to:

- support providers to utilise the relaxations to these ITT criteria;
- 'where possible', enable trainees to demonstrate the Teachers' Standards across the full age and ability of training (C2.1) and provide them with the opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of progression across, and before and after, the age range they are training to teach (C2.2);
- make measured but decisive responses to the ongoing COVID-19 context.

It is arranged in 3 sections focussing on:

1. ITT placements in virtual environments
2. Placement arrangements and quality
3. Setting/school access and safety

1: ITT placements in virtual environments

Providers are considering how to adapt provision to new contexts, including:

1.1 Developing methodologies and systems for virtual and distant placements by:

- Using partial or fully online/virtual experience in response to virus spikes, regional lockdowns or trainees being physically unable to be in settings/ schools for their placement.

- Using alternative virtual experience, for example independent research on specific issues; working online with peers; critiquing face-to-face and online teaching including video/online materials; micro-teaching in trainee groups; creating simulated setting/school contexts; adapting generic approaches and resources to respond to different setting/school contexts.

- Exploring the potential of using live-streaming or filmed lessons informed by guidance such as that in section 3.1 and 3.2 below.

- Supporting trainees and mentors to remain actively engaged in a distant placement by developing partnership-wide and/or setting/ school-specific arrangements to meet COVID-19 circumstances. These include negotiating clear expectations and approaches to mentor meetings; support and feedback when either the mentor or tutor is self-isolating yet not unwell; the training expectations of trainees and mentors in distant placements.

- Developing specialised sessions in partner settings/schools and/or the provider centre to familiarise trainees with different IT platforms and build their confidence in using and evaluating varied approaches to online learning and teaching.

- Providing Child Education and Online Protection (CEOP) training for trainees so they are aware of online safety issues.

- Establishing points of contact for mentors and trainees with the provider, for example personal and academic tutors, link tutors and/or 'COVID-19 support tutors'.

1.2 Upskilling centre-based training staff in the use of online learning platforms by:

- Using the Open University's free online course 'Take your teaching online.' This explains the key differences between teaching online and teaching face-to-face and the different skillsets that are required to adapt existing teaching to an online environment: https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=77528

- Using in-house experts to develop staff expertise in synchronous and asynchronous teaching pedagogies and the use of different IT platforms and technology.

- Encouraging staff to model effective online teaching that trainees can adopt in their practice with pupils.

- Helping trainees to work remotely, for instance developing and sharing a planned session on Google classrooms and using toolkits and packages such as: https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/product/google-classroom/

1.3 Securing remote communications with mentors/professional mentors/ITT coordinators and provider tutors using:

- Online mentor briefing and training.

- Video recordings, blogs, podcasts.

- PowerPoints with voiceovers.

- Online chat rooms for mentors.

- Online drop-in surgeries for mentors as well as trainees.

- Online placement hubs allowing mentors to access all documentation.

- Email bulletins weekly or monthly.

- Short videos to replace newsletters and/or to provide tightly focused advice and support on training matters.

- Effective communications and agreed service standards, for example rapid responses to emails received from schools.

2: Placement arrangements and quality

Providers are adjusting their placement arrangements to accommodate COVID-19 impacts, including:

2.1 Adapting their conversations and relationships with schools by:

- Holding regular discussions with partners, schools, and MATs about the changing context to better understand school concerns, pick up local intelligence and reach agreement on approaches to placements, training, and partnership agreements.

- Reassuring schools that trainees can support school recovery plans, a year group, subject or classroom bubble approach and provide additional support for pupils with 'catch up' activities.

- Talking to schools about ways in which trainees may support school improvement priorities whilst also experiencing quality training opportunities.

- Regularly updating websites with up to date advice on placements for schools, mentors, and trainees. The text aims to offer reassurance, answer frequently asked questions and is informed by the latest available guidance from the DfE, Public Health England and relevant local authorities.

- Developing tasks and activities with individual school partners focused on school needs as well as trainees' learning and progression, for example:

  » Tasks drawn from school improvement priorities designed to enhance trainees' subject or curriculum expertise, enabling them to research a curriculum area, create a sequence of lesson plans, and explain how this sequence fits into the overall curriculum to support progression. In addition, identifying the research strategies employed and how these may be applied to other topics or curriculum areas.

  » Using trainees' existing specialist subject or curriculum expertise to create resources and/or online activities in areas where existing school expertise or resources are limited.

  » Primary trainees working with primary curriculum co-ordinators/subject leaders on curriculum planning and resourcing that increases trainees' knowledge of the foundation subjects and support the co-ordinator's/subject leader's work.
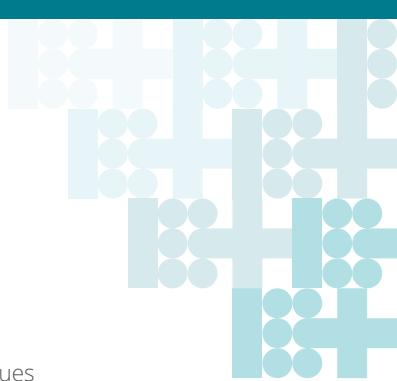
2.2 Developing greater flexibility in placement arrangements and planning by:

- Utilising rolling placements and flexibility in placement patterns and timings, whilst recognising that the use of flexible rolling placements may lead to a later training finish for some trainees in 2020/21.

- Making greater use of a more incremental approach to trainees' leading learning and teaching at the start of their training.

- Retaining trainees in one placement and only changing their teaching bubble at pre-determined intervals and with a suitable isolation break to provide different experiences, for example, engagement with different year groups, ability ranges or teaching arrangements.

- Moving the dates of the second placement to later in the year and/or postponing specialised setting/school-based training experiences to the summer term (for example specialised SEND placements; 'expert' sessions for all trainees in one setting/school).

- Securing second placements for trainees by creating 2-week circuit breaks which allow for self-isolation (Christmas, an extended February half term, Easter).

- Giving early priority to trainees whose placements were curtailed by the first lockdown.

- Giving very early notice to settings/schools of the intention to place a trainee by category rather than name to allow for individual trainee needs to be met more easily and without confusing settings/schools or trainees by changing allocations.

- Considering 'virtual placements' where trainees are 'in school', supporting learning, but not physically on the premises. More information on placements in virtual environments is set out in section 1, above.

- Identifying a strong mentor for a returning deferred trainee in case external visits are restricted.

- Supporting mentor capacity and workload issues by delivering mentor training online, minimising points of contact that allow infection to spread by making use of online platforms for regular discussion and feedback and allocating provider staff resource to support mentors.

- Identifying alternative mentors in settings/schools who will support a trainee if their mentor is ill or self-isolating.

- Encouraging trainees to develop a deeper understanding and practical experience of educational disadvantage, vulnerability, mental health and the families and local communities their school serves, for example by:
  - » undertaking research for instance utilising the school dashboard, or school records;
  - » working with specialist teachers, such as a SEND lead;
  - » gaining practical experience of a teacher's professional role by taking wider responsibilities including, for example, those related to safeguarding and hygiene requirements.

2.3 Establishing effective and beneficial paired and group placements by:

- Discussing with all stakeholders, including trainees, the training rationales behind paired and group placements, and their benefit to settings/schools, pupils and trainees.

- Identifying and addressing, in advance of placements, potential mentor and trainee concerns about the practicalities of paired placements. This might include considering advice and guidance on determining what is appropriate for each trainee as shared and solo experiences; how individual as well as shared feedback sessions have value and may be supportively facilitated; how mentor workload is frequently reduced and can be more sharply focused because the peer relationship promotes higher levels of preparation, planning and reflection for the trainees.

- Considering with partner settings/schools different approaches to paired and small group placements. For example, pairing or grouping for a full placement; pairing of all teaching experience for a short period; developing a mix of paired and separate teaching; placing two secondary trainees in one department, each with their own mentor but working together in planning and delivering teaching as well as assessing pupils; being attached to the same bubble to facilitate sharing of responsibilities and mentoring; developing new mentors alongside existing mentors to increase mentoring capacity and provide support for each trainee or the pair/group in complementary ways.

- Familiarising themselves with the existing research base to inform effective planning, discussion and identification of the benefits of paired and groups placements to trainee

learning and to settings/schools. Building on publications such as those listed below that offer a combination of theoretical exploration of the pedagogy behind pairing in initial teacher training, literature reviews on the subject and examples of practical implementation:

- » Paul Wilson, Alison Bolster (2011), 'New Models of Teacher Education: Collaborative paired placements':
  http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/207323.pdf

- » P. Sorensen (2014), 'Collaboration, dialogue and expansive learning: The use of paired and multiple placements in the school practicum':
  https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/994076

- » F. McKeon (2014), 'Developing a 'dynamic' and collaborative pedagogy for postgraduate certificate (PGCE) secondary mathematics students':
  https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/29422568.pdf

2.4 Remotely monitoring trainees' wellbeing, progress and development by:

- Uploading summaries of weekly review meetings between trainees and mentors on digital platforms, enabling tutors and leaders to review documentation, determine whether trainees are on track or a cause for concern, and provide appropriate support for trainees and mentors.

- Planning virtual one-day support sessions into the middle of the placement, to address issues arising, including workload and wellbeing.

- Buying in third-party wellbeing training and support.

- Developing trainees' resilience and wellbeing as part of induction activities using materials such as:
  https://impact.chartered.college/article/promoting-resilience-trainee-teachers/
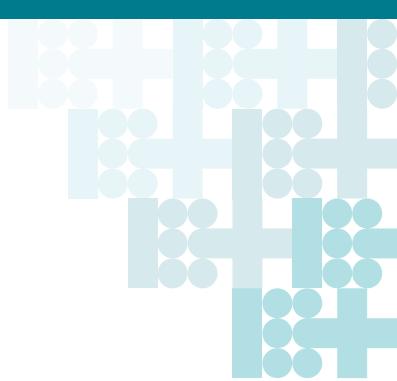
- Setting up online support networks or buddy groups for example:
  » secondary subject trainees;
  » phase groups;
  » buddy groups linking individual trainees with previous trainees;
  » trainee-led peer networks;
  » linking secondary subject trainees with subject trainees in other local partnerships.
- Scheduling online training sessions to ensure trainees take regular breaks and engage with varied learning activities and formats including:
  » in-session offline tasks;
  » small breakout groups on online platforms.
- Providing additional expert support online for example:
  » allocating personal or link tutors to support small groups of trainees;
  » providing additional training support to trainees transitioning between ITT and the ECF;
  » providing needs-responsive, tailored one-to-one support.
- Paying to facilitate trainees' access to wider resources and support for example, membership of subject associations or NQT membership of the Chartered College of Teaching so that completing trainees can access support and information on the ECF Hub.
- Providing short weekly bulletins, blogs or podcasts for trainees.

2.5 Making greater use of extended conversations and 'unseen observations' with trainees based on reseach and pedagogic critique and advice, for example:

- Oliver Caviglioli (2015), 'Coaching with unseen observations': This provides an alternative approach to classroom observations and feedback. It uses unseen observations, and professional dialogue rather than feedback to focus on deep learning through professional conversations: https://teachinghow2s.com/blog/coaching-with-unseen-observations#:~:text=So%20 let's%20clarify%20the%20main,of%20their%20 selected%20teaching%20techniques
- Matt O'Leary (November 2020), 'Rethinking the improvement of teaching and learning in a virtual environment': This describes a teacher-centred model of observation where the fundamental work takes place in the pre- and post-session conversations that form the foundation of the unseen observation cycle.

2.6 Monitoring and quality assuring placements at a distance

- Monitoring uploaded records of setting/school-based training and activities to check both trainees' entitlements and the quality of provision and inform rapid intervention to address any shortfalls.
- Employing a structured template to support checks on entitlement and quality during tutor visits or remote meetings.
- Holding more frequent provider reviews of mentors' support and feedback to trainees.
- Using setting/school-based staff to complete both observations and internal moderation for example, host teachers and mentors, mentors and ITT coordinators, subject mentors and another subject specialist in the department, remote moderation of feedback on a lesson observation.
- Employing remote approaches to external moderation for example, virtual interviews with trainees, mentors and central staff; remote access to recent records; remote moderator observation of final assessments or/and remote involvement in virtual assessment boards.

3: Placements: setting/school access and safety

ITT providers have outlined they are doing the following:

3.1 Keeping up to date with government and Department for Education (DfE) guidance and sharing relevant update information with their partnership including:

- DfE guidance on how any restrictions in education settings would be implemented as a coronavirus (COVID-19) containment measure:
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-contingency-framework-for-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings-excluding-universities

- DfE advice on remote observations and moderation:
  Coronavirus (COVID-19): initial teacher training (ITT) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

- DfE guidance on how to teach pupils to stay safe online:
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools

- DfE regular updates for education and childcare providers:
  https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare

- DfE regular updates for schools that include advice on the expectations and deployment of ITT trainees:
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools

- DfE updates for ITT providers indicating actions, based on public health advice, that providers may wish to consider as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) disruptions:
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt

- DfE updates related to ITT in the regular Teacher Recruitment Bulletins. You can register for the Teacher Recruitment Bulletin by emailing:
  teacher.recruitmentbulletin@education.gov.uk

3.2 Utilising information provided by specialist organisations and sector groups to guide trainees and trainers in online safety and conducting risk assessments, for example:

- South West Grid for learning (SWGfl) advice on remote learning:
  https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/safe-remote-learning/

- NSPCC guidance on e-safety for schools:
  https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/e-safety-for-schools

- UCET COVID-19 risk assessment advice:
  https://www.ucet.ac.uk/12086

3.3 Ensuring that effective risk assessments are in place, updated, understood and applied across the partnership for example:

- Referencing key provisions, expectations and rules that will be applied to all placements to provide reassurance to trainees and partnership settings.

- Ensuring all trainees and partners understand their setting/school policies, practices and rules relating to COVID-19 arrangements as well as those of the SCITT and establishing a clear understanding across the partnership of how or where school policies and approaches may take priority over SCITT arrangements.

- Ensuring that every in-setting/school induction introduces trainees to relevant specific risk assessment processes and protocols including any age- or subject-specific procedures for example, in PE, science or drama.

- Developing contingency scenarios for trainees, mentors and other experts who may be unable to be physically present during periods of placement.
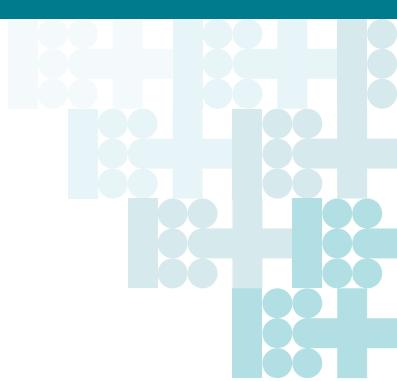
- Explaining how trainees can safely observe whilst limiting their contact with pupils and staff for example, positioning themselves in an allocated, sectioned-off space for the observation, observing from the classroom doorway or via a video link.

- Creating a document which identifies a wide range of COVID-19 scenarios that trainees and settings/schools might face, including guidance on how each scenario should be addressed.

- Developing with partner settings/schools a shared understanding of the COVID-19 contingency framework and how this may affect the initial COVID-19 arrangements agreed across the partnership.

- Sharing across partners effective ways of managing risk and different approaches to risk assessment.

- Ensuring that risk assessments consider safety, contagion, and trainee entitlements to training.

3.4 Providing COVID-19 school/setting access and safety guidance to trainees including information about:

- The symptoms of COVID-19.

- General health and safety requirements.

- Following COVID-19 procedures in placement settings/schools for example, maintaining social distancing, utilising shared resources and physical spaces, cleaning.

- Safe travelling to and from placements, including supportive adjustments to the expected time that the trainee is in setting/school to permit pre- or post-rush hour travel by public transport.

- Notification requirements about absence arising from for example, personal illness; bubble, setting or self-isolation; or local and national lockdown requirements.

- Expectations for professional conduct in and out of settings.

- Who to contact about placement safety and access concerns.

3.5 Supporting partner settings with responses to queries about trainee placements from parents, carers, staff, and governors, by explaining that trainees:

- Are classed as 'critical workers' and the DfE is encouraging settings/schools to continue to offer placements to trainees: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt/coronavirus-covid-19-initial-teacher-training-itt

- Apply procedures and processes for COVID-19 secure placements based on government guidance designed to avoid transmission issues by maintaining social distancing and using hand sanitising and respiratory hygiene guidance.

- Work within the same bubble of staff and pupils to minimise contacts and transmission.

- Keep records of placement contacts for NHS Test and Trace.

- Can play a significant role in supporting settings/schools by planning and resourcing sequences of learning; co-planning, supporting, delivering and evaluating the remote teaching of lessons; marking and assessing pupils' online work; working on a one-to-one basis with pupils that need significant intervention either face-to-face or virtually if a pupil is not physically in a setting/school; supporting pupils outside of the classroom, for example, by organising lunch or break periods and engaging appropriately in wider professional activities.

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