

# Initial teacher education (ITE) consultation engagement 2020: frequently asked questions

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For any questions specific to the Department for Education (DfE), we ask that enquirers [contact the DfE directly](#).

## Mentors

### **Q: How will trainee and mentor observation feature in an ITE inspection?**

A: During visits to placements, inspectors will aim to establish how the trainee is using what they have learned in their centre-based training within a classroom setting. The inspectors will also aim to establish how the mentor and trainee reflect on what has been learned, and how well this has been implemented in a classroom environment. These visits are not lesson observations. Inspectors will not be making a judgement about the quality of the trainee's teaching. You can find further details in paragraphs 93–96 of the draft [ITE inspection handbook](#).

### **Q: How are ITE partnerships expected to ensure consistency in mentoring?**

A: Inspectors will consider how persistent partnership leaders and managers are in ensuring the consistent application of effective policies and procedures. This is to ensure that trainees receive their entitlement to good-quality mentoring. The draft ITE inspection handbook outlines this.

Inspectors will also look to see how leaders provide high-quality professional development for all mentors and trainers involved in the partnership. They will look at the systems and procedures that ITE leaders have in place to ensure and assure the quality of the mentors who work with trainee teachers. In cases when ITE leaders know that there are limitations, inspectors will look at what action they have taken to mitigate these inconsistencies.

### **Q: For a secondary or further education and skills trainee, does the mentor have to be a subject specialist?**

A: Not necessarily. However, trainees would benefit from specialist mentoring that helps them to train in their chosen area. We would encourage all decisions relating to placements to be made with the best interests of the trainee in mind.

### **Q: Mentors are not recruited or chosen by the central ITE provider, meaning there is limited control for obtaining high-quality placements. Are there plans to make school leaders more accountable for contributions towards ITE within their schools, for example within the education inspection framework (EIF)?**

A: It is already an EIF requirement for inspectors to assess the quality of mentoring within a setting. This is to establish what school leaders have done to support the quality of trainee mentoring. You can find details in paragraph 90 of the [school inspection handbook](#).

## **Systematic synthetic phonics (SSP)**

### **Q: What is Ofsted's expectation of secondary trainees' knowledge and experience of teaching phonics?**

A: We would expect leaders to consider the context of the partnership and the placements assigned to trainee teachers. For example, in some cases, it may be that the trainee will go on to work in a school that has a high proportion of pupils who arrive at secondary school with difficulties in learning to read. Therefore, you may have designed your curriculum to encompass early reading so that secondary English trainees acquire high levels of subject and curriculum knowledge.

### **Q: During an inspection of the primary phase, will there always be a focused review of SSP? Will there be a focused review on foundation subjects more generally or will one or two specific subjects be selected?**

A: Yes, the draft handbook sets out that primary and early years inspection teams will always include a focused review and trainee visits on early reading and phonics.

In terms of foundation subjects, the draft handbook sets out that inspectors will not begin with a focused review into individual foundation subjects, religious education (RE) or science. Inspectors will agree with leaders which areas outside of English and mathematics should be a part of a focused review.

### **Q: There are concerns that in the draft ITE handbook it is saying that SSP is the only way to teach early reading and the draft ITE handbook precludes critical discussion of a broad and balanced approach to reading. Is this correct?**

A: SSP is a requirement of the primary national curriculum and is what newly qualified teachers (NQTs) will be expected to teach in schools and academies. We therefore inspect this as part of the EIF. Teaching trainees to teach SSP as part of the early reading package is also a requirement of the DfE's ITT core content framework. This does not mean that trainees cannot be made critically aware that historically other methods for teaching reading existed. However, the clear expectation in the draft ITE handbook is that providers will train trainees to teach SSP.

## **DfE ITT core content framework**

### **Q: How are partnerships expected to deal with the amount of work required when considering both the new DfE ITT core content framework and the new Ofsted ITE inspection framework?**

A: The Secretary of State has asked for all routine Ofsted inspections to be suspended as a result of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Following the public consultation closing on 3 April 2020, we still plan to publish the new ITE inspection framework in the summer term to give providers plenty of time to familiarise themselves with it. By then – and through discussions with the DfE – we may be in a position to clarify when routine inspections will resume, including those of ITE providers.

## **Data and outcomes**

### **Q: Can I still show and discuss with inspectors the data that the partnership holds on trainees?**

A: During an ITE inspection, inspectors will use or consider data that helps explain the context of the ITE partnership. Therefore, the partnership is able to discuss data with inspectors. Data may be useful to provide an understanding of why the partnership has made certain decisions in structuring the ITE curriculum. However, it is essential to note that, unlike the previous ITE framework, there will not be a judgement formed around outcomes.

## **Grading of trainees and the teachers' standards**

### **Q: How will Ofsted assess trainees' work if partnerships are not expected to assess against the teachers' standards?**

A: The teachers' standards are an end-point assessment. Providers should be checking whether trainees have learned the content and skills set out in their intended curriculum. If trainees have learned the intended knowledge and skills, as set out in the sequenced curriculum, then progress has been made. Using outcome descriptors prematurely, such as the teachers' standards, is therefore unhelpful.

## **Notification call and inspection cycle**

### **Q: When will providers receive the notification call?**

A: Usually, you will receive the notification call on a Wednesday, the week before inspection, between 9:30 and 11:00 in the morning.

**Q: Can Ofsted increase the time given before the notification call and inspection for the provider to organise partnership visits?**

A: We have increased the notification time by a day (from Thursday to Wednesday). We recognise the complexities involved in setting up an inspection and so have been able to maintain an increased notice period in a climate where there is pressure for no-notice inspections.

During the notification call, there will be preparation for a longer, reflective and educationally focused conversation to discuss high-level details about the partnership before the inspection starts. Further conversation might be necessary to discuss other practical issues.

## **ITE curriculum**

**Q: The definition of 'ITE curriculum' seems very simple. Should there be a more detailed definition?**

A: Our working definition of an ITE curriculum is intentionally simple. It is not for us to establish an ITE curriculum. We have made clear within our draft handbook that we will judge fairly all partnerships that take different approaches to the ITE curriculum. As stated within the handbook, we recognise the importance of partnerships' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. However, it is also made clear that, for primary and secondary phases, partnerships must ensure that the curriculum provides trainees with the minimum entitlement, as set out in the DfE's ITT core content framework.

**Q: It is not clear how providers would/should evaluate curriculum impact given that the focus on outcomes has been removed. Can Ofsted provide an example of how this might look in practice?**

A: Providers should be checking whether trainees have learned the content and skills set out in their intended curriculum. If trainees have learned the intended knowledge and skills, as set out in the sequenced curriculum, then progress has been made towards the intended impact.

**Q: How will Ofsted 'measure' the quality of the curriculum? What is the 'criteria' and 'evidence'?**

A: The draft ITE inspection framework and handbook set out the criteria that we will use to consider the quality of the ITE curriculum. How curriculum will be inspected in ITE settings and the evidence that inspectors may gather are set out in the draft ITE handbook.

## **Trainee survey**

### **Q: Is the trainee online questionnaire going to change to reflect the new framework?**

A: Yes, we will update this in due course. We will communicate it to partnerships to distribute to trainee teachers to complete.

## **Recruitment of trainees**

### **Q: What level of involvement does Ofsted expect to see from the partnership when it comes to recruitment and selection of trainees?**

A: We have set out within [paragraph 174 of the draft ITE handbook](#) that inspectors must consider how well leaders and managers ensure the rigour of the partnership's recruitment and selection process. They should consider the following:

- Recruiting trainees with the potential to meet the needs of local, regional or national employers and the needs of the wider educational community, including schools, colleges and/or settings in challenging socio-economic circumstances and those judged as requires improvement.
- Selecting candidates with appropriate qualifications, relevant subject/specialist knowledge and the potential to meet the relevant professional standards by the end of their training.
- Placing applicants on a training programme that makes best use of their skills, aptitudes and previous experience, and develops their subject knowledge as appropriate.