**The following pages are the starting point of our Talking Heads approach to speaking with school leaders and governors about why they should (and how they could) provide placements for trainee teachers in these Covid times.**

Please read and respond with your own short contribution in the form of prose, chart, sketch or letter. We would hope to get this out to schools through our networks by the end of the month, in both written form and possibly by speaking aloud these messages in an open zoom format.

It would also be appreciated if you could add to the third section on risk reduction.

Please email your responses as well as any thoughts you have on effective platforms we could use to share the Talking Heads with a wide audience.

Margaget.Mulholland@ascl.org.uk

Caroline.Daly@ucl.ac.uk

julie.greer@cherbourg.hants.sch.uk

If you can copy us all in, that will help us to coordinate the responses.

Many thanks

**An appeal**

**Why schools should continue to provide placements for trainee teachers.**

Do you remember your teaching practices? I’d be surprised if you don’t. They are a vital experience that helped shape our teacher identity; our skills and characteristics. It’s like learning to ride a bike, drive a car, or play an instrument: These are all things you could experience in a virtual world, but you can only learn competence, flair and an emotional engagement with these skills, if they are practiced in person. It is on a trainee placement that increasing proficiency will develop motivation, resilience and determination, without which a new teacher would find it hard to keep going.

We are already fearful that so many of our recently qualified teachers will be going into their first teaching post with so little knowledge drawn from real classrooms and little familiarity with the culture of schools. This Autumn term we will need the increased involvement from a range of staff to ensure our NQTs have access to an upgraded package of mentoring, support, team teaching, coaching, observations and professional conversations with colleagues, to develop the skills that have not yet been honed.

In response to Covid-19 the DfE has reduced the number of teaching days required to obtain qualified teacher status. Whilst that was welcomed by many, we need to be sure that this is not a short cut to slashing the requirement for teachers to learn to teach in the classroom. Schools need their NQTs to arrive with a standard and competency they can rely on; so it follows that schools have a responsibility to provide the training that they need their teachers to acquire.

A trainee should be welcomed into school, as an integral part of our learning community, not as a stranger or a visitor. Whilst it would be important to assess the risk of someone entering into our schools at any time, in these times of Coronavirus we need to undergo the process of weighing the risk against the likelihood of an event and balance those risks with the gains.

The risk of a well person bringing Covid-19 into the school environment is relatively low and no greater than the risk that any school staff present each day. A trainee would be responsible for maintaining the measures that a school has put in place, to not do so would be managed in the same way as any other breach of professional standards. These procedures are already in place in schools. The DfE guidance states that, within the current pandemic, we maintain ‘bubbles’ of children and staff where we can. It would be reasonable if the teaching placement is within a second or third wave, to assign the trainee to a ‘bubble’. If the local risk of contagion is low, then schools may be able to relax some of their regulations around staff moving between bubbles, to enable a trainee to observe others and have contact with mentor and colleagues, maintaining an appropriate distance with ease.

In making the decision of whether to offer placements next year, it appears that the gains have been squashed by the perception of risk, driven by an assessment of fear. The advantages of having a trainee are numerous for a school community and for the trainee. To name a few:

* Demonstrating that we are all here to learn. Recognising that a trainee is learning to teach can be so powerful for pupils and supports their own ambitions and understanding of a life-long commitment to learning.
* Maintaining important links with Higher Education and educational research, which informs developments in pedagogy and our metacognition.
* Reinforcing our own practice. Let us not forget Piaget and his understanding that we assimilate new knowledge and then accommodate it by applying our skills in different contexts. We usually choose teacher mentors because we recognise their own strengths in the classroom, but mentoring others can really develop the mentor’s thinking about teaching and learning and further embed their own good practice, which can then be shared with more colleagues.
* Enabling flexible teaching. A trainee teacher is able to develop their interest in a subject area, such as phonics or fractions, by taking a small group over a period of time, which can make a real difference to that group and benefit the rest of the class too. Done well, teaching alongside the teacher practitioner can double the teacher input for a class and enhance the learning, providing pre learning to groups or individuals, reinforcing a teaching point in the lesson, or supporting pupils to review and apply their learning at the close of a lesson.
* A school should be able to provide a good enough experience for a trainee, so that school staff miss that trainee when they have gone. There will always be trainees who need more support and who take longer to develop their teacher presence, but an inclusive school will have a good infrastructure to support the mentor to support the trainee, using the experience to problem solve and resolve. Important skills for the senior management role to which good teacher mentors can aspire.

Sharing the practice and culture of our schools, of which we are right to be proud, is important for the future of education and the professional quality of our teachers. Why would we not want to share what we do with our colleagues who will teach the next generation?

**One solution**

**More trainees, better experiences for pupils and teachers…**

Pre and post Covid-19 the argument for saturating schools with trainee teachers is compelling. A new normal for ITT where we are encouraging schools to host additional placements.

To benefit from a model of professional learning that will directly benefit pupils who have experienced learning loss.

**How can schools do this?**

Take paired or multiple placements in each department

Once you have experienced paired placements as a Head of Department or as a mentor you understand how rather than adding to mentoring responsibilities, a pair placement reduces the burden on mentors.

Even within a small department it is possible to place and benefit from multiple trainees.

Co-planning, co-teaching and co-assessment can improve teaching and learning for trainees and the schools they work in.

Who benefits?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil**  | **Mentor**  | **School/Department**  |
| Adult support for groups and individuals increased | Having a team to work with Mentor gains skills in directing focused support and delegating  | A departmental focus on strengthening teaching and learning  |
| Addressing individual needs – reasonable adjustments | Learning from different approaches – questioning and challenging own practice | A greater sense of team and collaboration – even more so for small departments who miss this.  |
| Improving on task/engagement | Being able to observe own class – strengthening forensic teaching  | Opportunities to innovate and plan curriculum developments as a team |
| Additional expertise – subject specialist in class | Having two helpers to your workload but being able to mentor them together | Inclusivity is promoted through a co-teaching model |
| Response to pupil questions | Trainees talk through, problematize, reflect and refine together. Not everything focused on you to support  | High degree of on-going professional learning for the wider departmental team and school |
| Inclusivity is strengthened | Collaborative learning  | Tutor group also gains support. |
| Opportunities for enhanced reflection | Skills to encourage trainees to reflect and respond | Develop strong reflective practice |
| Beneficial adult to child ratio | Shared workload - marking and assessment is shared out and overseen by mentor | Developing a community of practice  |

* Student teacher - Multiple benefits are experienced by the student teacher. Being in a paired placement provides student teachers with a rich learning experience because of tensions, dialog and reflections that come from being placed with a peer. More likely to risk take.
* Pupils - benefit from having multiple student teachers working in their classroom.
* Mentors and Departments – trainees bring extra capacity to their team. There is a focus on improved teaching that the whole team supports and engages with.

**Benefits of multiple placements in each department**

Trainee teachers can enhance school development planning; additional trainees, additional capacity. Strengthening the **community of practice** across the school and within departments

**Responding to risk, not reacting to fear – Please add to this**

What risks does a trainee present to a school community that are different from any other member of staff?

* Moving continuously between two settings, e.g school placement and University
* ?

What practical ways can we successfully reduce the risk that a trainee may present to a school community?

* Work closely with professional lead body to reduce the risk from working across two settings in close proximity with others without a reasonable time gap between.
* Consider one teaching placement as the ‘norm’ where the trainee teacher remains attached to the school in case of closures. A second placement for enrichment that is provided late in the year, which is flexible and determined by circumstances (including school closures). If schools are closed for part of the year, the main focus is on consolidating development within the main placement school, not moving to another.
* Complete a confidential risk assessment with the trainee where the trainee may present with underlying medical vulnerabilities including anxiety, see below for example. Ensure the trainee has agency in the process and the solutions.

Trainee Teacher Confidential Risk Assessment in relation to Covid-19

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Role(s) in school and where based: |
|  |  |
|  |
| Completed with (name and role) | Date | Method e.g. by phone/face to face | Where e.g. from home |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |
| Details of any presenting concerns (if appropriate), e.g. asthma, anxiety: |
|  |
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|  |
| Risk identified | Level of risk | Likelihood to occur | Comments |
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|  |
| Risk management PlanList each measure that could reduce the risk | Action by whom and by when | Action by when | Review date |
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| Team around youPeople who can support you to reduce risk | Role in school | Forms of support which may be helpful | Review |
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| Signed  | Date |
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