



Department  
for Education

# **Government response to the Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT)**

**January 2015**

## Introduction

We welcome this important report. Evidence from around the world consistently tells us that the quality of teaching is the single most important school-based factor determining how well children achieve<sup>1</sup>. The best systems from around the world train their teachers rigorously at the outset, focusing particularly on the practical teaching skills they will need.

In 2014 we launched an independent review of the quality and effectiveness of ITT courses. Providing the best possible training is at the heart of this government's drive to improve teaching standards and ensure children from all backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence. Sir Andrew Carter was asked to look across the full range of ITT courses and seek views from those involved across the sector to:

- define effective ITT practice
- assess the extent to which the current system delivers effective ITT
- recommend where and how improvements could be made
- recommend ways to improve choice in the system by improving the transparency of course content and methods

We are pleased that the review finds that ITT is generally good with some room for improvement in particular areas. The review highlights strengths across different ITT routes.

The report includes some important messages for the sector. Like all professional development for teachers, the report emphasises that ITT should have a relentless focus on pupil outcomes. The review also stresses the importance of recognising that ITT is initial and that the link between ITT and further professional development is critical. The findings of this report chime well with the plans we have set out in our *World Class Teaching* consultation, to improve the quality of teachers' professional development and learning and to support the creation of a new independent professional body for teaching.

This report also provides practical advice to those involved in ITT about the most important areas of content which should be covered. We are pleased that the report also champions the role of the school-based mentor, who is clearly essential for successful school-led ITT. The report directs a range of recommendations to the sector - to providers and schools involved in ITT. We hope these will be taken forward by the sector as useful advice on best practice. The review has also suggested some areas for system-wide improvement. Sir Andrew has put forward some recommendations to address these - our response to these is set out below.

## Responses to Recommendations

1. Sir Andrew Carter has made a number of recommendations to support improvements in the ITT system. Here we respond to those recommendations aimed at government or the system as a whole.

**Recommendation 1: DfE should commission a sector body (for example, the Teaching Schools Council, a future professional body (College of Teaching), or another sector body) to develop a framework of core content for ITT.** We believe that a framework of the essential elements of core content would build a stronger shared understanding of good ITT content meaning that trainees will have a more consistent experience. We also hope that this framework will provide trainees with a greater understanding of the areas they should be covering in ITT. We feel it is critical that a framework is developed by the sector, rather than by central government.

2. After broad consultation the review drew some important conclusions about the most important issues new teachers should cover during their initial training. They also found considerable variability in the extent to which these issues appeared to be covered in ITT courses. They found particularly significant gaps in areas such as subject knowledge and subject-specific training, behaviour management, pupil assessment and special educational needs. We agree with these findings and support the recommendation to develop a framework of core content for ITT. A framework will be helpful in providing those involved in ITT with a better shared understanding of the important issues which should be covered.

3. The Secretary of State will respond to this recommendation by commissioning an independent working group made of expert representatives from the sector to develop the framework. The working group will report back to the Secretary of State.

**Recommendation 4: DfE should make funded in-service subject knowledge enhancement courses available for primary teachers to access as professional development** – particularly in subjects such as modern languages, computing, music as well as maths and science.

4. To support subject knowledge development, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) has funded providers to deliver post-initial teacher training (ITT) subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) courses across a range of subjects, including primary maths. For the financial year 2014-15, this took the form of a grant-funded test and learn project with a small group of Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) to develop and deliver a range of post-ITT SKE provision in shortage subjects particularly maths, physics, chemistry, modern languages, computing and primary maths, to meet local and

regional capacity needs. This new delivery approach supports the NCTL vision of enabling and encouraging the development of a self-improving, school-led system, and puts schools at the centre of decision making to meet their workforce needs. We welcome the review's recommendation and plan to share materials and learning from this project to support other schools to develop effective practice and continue to support schools to deliver primary maths subject knowledge enhancement courses. We will also consider what more might be done in the longer-term in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

5. This recommendation should also be taken forward by the sector. Teaching School alliances are well-placed to offer more subject training for primary schools, where appropriate working with key subject partnerships such as Maths Hubs.

**Recommendation 6: The Teachers' Standards should be amended to be more explicit about the importance of teachers taking an evidence-based approach.** We recognise that there are no current plans to review the Teachers' Standards. However, we feel this issue is of such importance that we strongly recommend that when the standards are eventually reviewed there should be a new standard which emphasises the importance of using evidence to inform teaching.

6. In the most successful countries teachers work together as a professional community, engaging with cutting-edge research and basing their own practice on the best available evidence of what works and their own professional expertise. They are accountable for the impact they have on their pupils, and they constantly strive to better their own knowledge and skills. We are pleased that Sir Andrew Carter's review recognises the importance of teachers becoming intelligent consumers of research and skilled in applying evidence-based teaching in their classrooms.

7. As the report notes, there are no current plans to review the Teachers' Standards. We are currently consulting on plans to support the establishment of an independent "College of Teaching". Provided that a body can be established successfully and secure credibility and broad representation within the profession, we expect that it should, over time, take greater responsibility for areas such as Teachers' Standards. As such, this recommendation may be for a future College of Teaching to take forward.

**Recommendation 7: A central portal of synthesised executive summaries providing practical advice on research findings about effective teaching in different subjects and phases should be developed. A future College of Teaching would be well placed to develop this.** Trainees and teachers should be able to quickly access up-to-date high quality research which can be interpreted easily to inform their practice. The Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) Teaching and Learning Toolkit is a good starting point in this area. The EEF toolkit, though, serves a number of purposes besides directly informing classroom practice – its main focus is to identify

effective interventions for disadvantaged pupils. We would like to see a central portal which synthesises the most up to date research findings in different subjects and phases and offers practical summaries to teachers.

8. This government is committed to supporting the teaching profession to become evidence-based. This is why we allocated £135 million to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to support schools to have access to robust research to help them make decisions about their schools and teaching practice. As Sir Andrew acknowledges, the Teaching and Learning Toolkit is an excellent first step, and the EEF is continuing to develop this further to include more practical advice, for example, case studies. But we are also keen to understand more about the most effective ways to support teachers to engage with and use research, which is why we invested an additional £1million in the EEF for the Research Use trials. These trials are explicitly testing the effectiveness of different ways of communicating research and engaging teachers with research findings which will help the EEF, Government and the sector to support research to have greater impact on practice and pupil outcomes.

9. The intention of this recommendation is one we wholeheartedly support. We will consider how best to take this forward in the short term with the EEF and the follow up to the *World-Class Teaching Profession* consultation. As described above, we are currently consulting on plans to support the establishment of a “College of Teaching”. As highlighted in the recommendation, a future college may be well-placed to lead the development of this portal. As an independent body, it will be for the College to consider this recommendation once established and ready.

**Recommendation 9:** Alongside a central portal on evidence-based practice, **a central repository of resources and guidance on assessment should be developed.** This would support the learning of trainees, as well as practicing teachers and teacher educators. Again, a future College of Teaching would be well placed to develop this, in partnership with expert organisations in assessment.

10. Following our reforms to pupil assessment, it is now for schools and teachers to decide how best to assess pupils. Naturally this means there is an increased responsibility for teachers in assessment and it is critically important that new teachers can securely assess pupils. The Carter Review has raised some concerns about the quality of training on assessment. We welcome this recommendation as a way to address these concerns. We agree with Sir Andrew’s proposal that this could be taken forward by a College of Teaching once it is established, in partnership with expert organisations - as an independent body it would be for the College to decide how to take this recommendation forward.

**Recommendation 12: DfE should commission a sector body, for example the Teaching Schools Council, to develop some national standards for mentors.** These would be used for self-evaluation and would not be mandatory. These would be designed to create a shared understanding of good mentoring.

11. This review emphasises how important school-based mentors are in delivering effective teacher training. The role of developing new teachers is clearly one of the most important in a school and mentors should have appropriate status and recognition. We agree that a set of national standards, developed and owned by the sector, would help raise the role's status and create a stronger shared understanding of the characteristics of effective mentoring. We welcome this recommendation and will be commissioning the Teaching Schools Council to develop a set of national standards for mentors. This is a natural role for the Teaching Schools Council. Teaching schools are outstanding schools that work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff. As such, they should be well-placed to work with outstanding mentors and ITT providers to develop these standards.

**Recommendation 14: Building on the development of school-led ITT, DfE should work in collaboration with the sector (all those involved in ITT) to consider the way in which teachers gain qualified teacher status (QTS) with a view to strengthening what has become a complex and sometimes confusing system. We would like applicants to understand that QTS is the essential component of ITT and that a PGCE is an optional academic qualification.**

12. The two coalition parties have different positions on this recommendation. Therefore the Government cannot take this recommendation forward.

**Recommendation 15: DfE should undertake a review of the effectiveness of the skills tests in selecting high quality trainees.**

13. The skills tests were introduced in 2000 in response to concerns about the standard of literacy and numeracy of new teachers. They were established to assess skills and knowledge which all teachers should have to carry out their wider professional role effectively. The tests have been made tougher as international comparisons show that rigorous selection of trainee teachers is an important part of the process in raising the quality and status of the teaching profession. We believe it is right that there is a high entrance bar for teaching. We are constantly evaluating how to ensure we recruit the most high quality trainees and will consider this issue, taking account of evidence on the effectiveness of this year's skills tests.

**Recommendation 16:** In order for applicants to make well informed decisions when choosing a course, **we recommend the development and expansion of the NCTL’s “Get into Teaching” website.** This should signpost information that applicants might consider when choosing a course, for example: provider Ofsted rating and inspection report; completion rates; NQT survey results; and employability rates.

14. Ensuring that applicants have access to appropriate and clear information is essential in supporting them to make well-informed decisions about ITT courses. This is not only important for their individual experience but also for promoting the quality of the ITT system as a whole. This is why we asked Sir Andrew to consider ways to improve choice in the ITT system by improving transparency of information. We welcome this recommendation. NCTL will develop a page on the Get into Teaching website which will signpost relevant information for applicants to consider.

**Recommendation 17:** In order for schools to find out how to get involved with ITT and make well informed decisions about the partners they work with, **we recommend that the Department for Education develop a page on the Gov.uk website to signpost information that schools should consider when making choices about a partner provider,** including, for example: provider Ofsted ratings and inspection reports; completion rates of trainees; and employability rates.

15. Encouraging more schools to become involved in ITT is central to our drive towards a more school-led system. It is important not only that schools know how they can get involved but also about the factors they should consider when choosing an accredited ITT provider with which to work. This is not only important for the school themselves but also because improving choice in the system helps to promote improvements across the system as a whole. We welcome this recommendation and will build on existing information available on gov.uk so that the information that schools should consider when choosing a partner provider is clearly signposted.



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