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An Introduction to Mentoring

Definition of term: Murray (2001) defines mentoring as 'the deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person' with someone with less skill or experience 'with a mutually agreed goal of having the less skilled person grow and develop specific competencies' (Murray, 2001: xiii). The Behaviour for Learning website defines mentoring as:

... an approach to fostering professional and personal development that has become increasingly favoured in a range of organisations. It is one of the most intimate of learning approaches and focuses upon the one to one relationship between mentor and mentee*. It helps individuals identify and focus on the positive changes they want to make for themselves and the path by which they will achieve those changes. It is a process which requires a degree of trust, self awareness and self honesty.

See also resource

Hay (1999) refers to mentoring as a developmental alliance in which all parties involved 'are enabled to grow and learn'.

Loughran (2006:170) states that 'Mentoring is about creating ways of building on critical conversations so that the actions that follow might lead to concrete learning outcomes whereby the valuing of experimentation, risk-taking and learning through experience might foster the notion that learning about teaching is a community affair' (p170).

It is important to make reference to the CUREE framework (DFES, 2005 which makes the distinction between mentoring and coaching. It describes coaching as a process in which the learner's performance develops and improves as a result of being supported by someone who has the subject knowledge, skills and techniques required in a particular field (such as sport) though who is not necessarily been successful themselves, the focus being on 'deepening specific skills within a supportive and challenging relationship' (DfES, 2005: 4).

*This glossary will refer to mentees as trainee teachers.

Key Guidance: Qualities of a successful school-based mentor

Mentoring has been described as a 'learning conversation' (DfES, 2006) between the mentor and the learner, in this case the trainee teacher in teacher education. However there is more to mentoring than merely discussing progress and actions. Therefore, to be successful, mentors must have the pedagogical acumen to provide trainee teachers with the support they need to enable them to develop their skills in a specific field. That is, mentors need to be experienced teachers themselves who can demonstrate the professional attributes, knowledge and understanding and skills required of trainee teachers as outlined in the *Framework for developing subject knowledge for teaching* (TDA, 2007).

Additionally, mentors should have some understanding of the strategies employed by adult learners, for example the experiential learning models of Kolb (1985) and how this might relate to the development of teachers' thinking and reflection (Calderhead & Gates 1993, King & Kitchener 1994).

Parsloe (1999) suggests that a good mentor needs to be a good motivator who is able to advise and instruct without interfering or imposing solutions, while allowing the learner to make mistakes and experiment over a period of time in an atmosphere of mutual trust. It is important to note that mentoring is not about cloning individual mentors but it is about encouraging the development of the student's individual techniques and skills and enabling them to make choices, decisions and mistakes (Kortman and Honaker, 2002: 20). Cameron and Baker (2004) suggest that the mentor's role is about negotiating the risks that the student should take in developing their own identity as a teacher, rather than merely copying role models in the host school.

Good mentors need to encourage learners, that is trainee teachers, to take ownership of their development, and need to be adept at assisting in the evaluation process by being an effective questioner and listener without being judgemental. Thus, the mentor needs to help the learner to reflect on, review and refine their practice; and to provide opportunities to extend their repertoire of skills through the sharing of planning, and by the observation of the learner's practice and that of the mentor or other skilled practitioner, accompanied by explicit discussion of pedagogical decisions. These skills will be referred to in detail later.

Mentors need a range of skills and competencies to be effective in their role. Thus, the 'Mentor Online Support System' website, provided by the Teach First National ITT Partnership, at: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/moss) suggests that a mentor should:

- show empathy
- be objective;
- be able to build confidence and trust - to act as a critical friend;
- be able use questioning skills effectively
- be able to tackle difficult issues;
- be able to give good feedback which is practical and specific so it can be acted on;
- have good relations with other staff;
- have a good knowledge of what the job entails;
- have an ability to convey a sense of mentor learning at the same time;
- have an awareness of problems likely to face the student and an ability to judge when to involve somebody else, either for additional support or for coaching in specialist skills;
- apply procedures and standards consistently in a manner that supports equity
- be of an innovatory disposition which enables them to take on a new challenge;

- have an ability to develop in the student an appetite for lifelong learning.

(adapted from the Teach First Mentors' website)

Mentors' Online Support System: References

The key qualities of the mentor are, of course, closely related to a particular model of mentoring. One such model is implicit in the Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status (TDA 2007), whereby the mentor engages in both formative and summative assessment of the trainee teacher's progress towards achieving the QTS Standards. The role of the mentor as assessor may operate in conflict with other models, for example that of Anderson & Shannon (1988) which emphasises nurturing and care-giving as primary mentoring functions. Furlong and Maynard (1995) offer a staged model of mentoring in which the mentor's mode of operation moves from that of an 'apprenticeship model' in the early stages of training, into a 'competency model' . In this process the trainee teacher moves from a collaborative teaching situation to that of a structured training programme supported by observation and feedback. However, as Furlong and Maynard point out (op. cit p. 20) trainee teachers may reach a stage (referred to as the 'plateau') where they can operate on the basis of established routines but do not extend their practice beyond this stage of basic competence. A further stage of mentoring practice, in this model, is that of 'reflective mentoring' which supports trainee teachers in shifting their focus from their own practice to that of pupils' learning.

However, while the Furlong and Maynard model offers a developmental perspective on the mentoring relationship, the potential tensions inherent in the mentor's role as assessor are not acknowledged.

Mentors need to be aware that the nurturing and developmental dimensions of their role can sit uneasily alongside the need to engage with the evaluation and assessment of trainee teachers' achievement of the QTS Standards, and that these different dimensions of their relationship with the trainee teacher may require skills of conflict resolution, in addition to those of empathy and critical friendship.

Who are mentors?

In teacher training and teacher education, mentors tend to be subject leaders (in secondary schools) or class teachers (in primary schools) who help develop the necessary pedagogic and classroom skills and professional understanding of the trainee teacher. These mentors are often supported by a Professional Mentor (these terms vary and can also be referred to as coordinator or similar), often a senior member of the school team who oversees the generic training of the trainee teacher in the school outside the subject or classroom area, and is usually the link with provider tutors. Being responsible for mentoring at any level also provides teachers with additional professional development opportunities via mentor training opportunities.

Host teachers (i.e. other teachers in the placement school) play a vital role in providing trainee teachers with a range of opportunities to develop their skill, knowledge and capabilities. It is the mentor's responsibility to liaise with host teachers and to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to assessment, guidance, support and advice. Professional mentors should be consulted regarding the selection of host teachers to work with trainee teachers. A host teacher will be expected to:

- Support and advise the trainee teacher in the classroom context as appropriate for their individual level of expertise, stage and phase of the ITT programme. This will include details of schemes of work, necessary records, resources, behaviour management strategies etc.
- Audit, expand on and advise the trainee teacher regarding subject knowledge and skills.
- Support all aspects of planning, preparation, teaching and evaluation and help to enhance the trainee teacher's confidence.
- Identify trainee teacher's strengths and areas for development.
- Provide oral and written guidance for trainee teacher in relation to subject knowledge, teaching skills and assessment, recording and reporting.
- Liaise with the Subject Mentor regarding the trainee teacher's progress.
- Support the mentor in setting and reviewing appropriate and realistic targets for the trainee teacher .
- Have some knowledge of QTS standards and contribute to formative assessments.
- Remain responsible for the teaching and learning of the pupils in their classes and be available during all teaching of classes by the trainee teacher.

The practice of effective mentoring

There is more to mentoring that merely observing a trainee teacher and then following this up with a debrief. . For mentoring to be wholly successful it needs to be planned and coordinated in a structured and coherent manner, adopting many varied strategies to ensure the effective development of the trainee teacher. These strategies could include; induction activities which can be **discussions of planning**, **collaborative teaching** prior to taking full classes, the trainee teacher making focused **observations of other practitioners** and reflecting on these, the mentor making regular **observations of the trainee teacher** followed by **discussion and reflection**, evaluation, target setting and reviewing in **weekly meetings** and, something which is possibly most often overlooked, direction to relevant theories to allow more critical reflection and triangulation by the learner. As well as these, it is important for mentors to be responsive to trainee teachers' diverse and individual needs. These strategies will be discussed below under four headings:

1. **Initial mentoring support practices**
2. **Making observations and providing feedback**
3. **Evaluating, reviewing and reflecting**
4. **Supporting trainee teachers' individual needs**

The glossary will discuss implications for practice with regard to Mentors, trainee teachers and will outline the roles of others involved in the mentoring process including Host Teachers.

1.   Initial mentoring support practices

There are many ways to provide mentoring support other than the subject mentor observing the trainee teacher on a weekly basis. Some effective ways of enhancing the mentoring process are outlined below and include **organising the training experience** including, providing suitable **whole school induction** and **departmental or phase/class induction, planning the timetable, planning to support the trainee teacher's individual's needs and teaching experiences** including **collaborative planning and teaching** and developing pedagogic understanding by providing opportunities for the **trainee teacher to observe and evaluate experienced practitioners.**

These activities ensure that high standards and expectations are set and agreed across the school as a whole to support trainee teachers fully.

1.1   Organising the training experience

Trainee teachers should be inducted into the whole school environment and into their department. Responsibility rests with the Professional Mentor who normally should arrange an induction programme for all trainee teachers, and the Subject Mentor who should arrange a suitable induction programme into the department.

1.1.1   Whole school induction. This is to provide a smooth induction to the school, and to encourage trainee teachers to settle into the school quickly, trainee teachers should ideally experience most or all of the following at the beginning of their time in school:

- Meetings with key school personnel including the Head teacher or senior staff with responsibility for trainee teachers and NQTs.
- A briefing introducing trainee teachers to the ethos of the school which would include guidance on key policies and practices, for example:
- Professional expectations of all members of staff and procedures to follow in the relation to staff absence, dress code, staff meetings, lunch and coffee arrangements, duties, etc
- Expectations in relation to pupil performance and behaviour

- Management and responsibility structures, including the names of relevant staff that trainee teachers may need to contact (e.g. pastoral, year, departmental staff, union representatives)
- The structure of the school day, pupil organisation such as tutor groups, year groups, banding, setting etc.
- A tour of the school.
- Providing procedures for accessing school equipment including ICT equipment (including a log in number and password), reprographics, library, booking of teaching spaces etc.
- Some schools provide a specific notice board for trainee teachers which include some brief detail and a photograph of the trainee teacher so that they become familiar to school staff. Some schools also provide a trainee teacher pigeonhole.
- A dedicated trainee teacher handbook with all relevant school information including detail of key staff and mentors, health and safety procedures, the behaviour policy, assessment policy and such like.
- Providing an activity to encourage the trainee teacher to become familiar with the layout of the school or by shadowing a pupil to get an idea of the school day from a pupil perspective.
- Provided with a dedicated weekly training allocation time and area with the Professional Mentor or trainer and other trainee teachers or NQTs in the school with a programme of training activities.

1.1.2 Departmental or phase/class induction. Trainee teachers should be introduced to policies, practice, teaching and non- teaching staff of the department or class including the following:

- Resources for teaching and learning
- Teaching spaces available
- Access to schemes of work
- Examination and/or assessment specifications, syllabuses and/or frameworks
- Examples of effective planning for teaching short, medium and long term
- Examples of pupil work and of assessment and marking practices
- Class lists, seating plans, assessment details of classes being taught by the trainee teacher
- Procedures for recording and reporting pupil progress
- Extended school provision
- Access to individual education plans (IEPs) of key pupils
- Discussion of the trainee teacher's individual needs, strengths and weaknesses (see1.2)
- A timetable (see1.3) including dedicated time allocation for the weekly meeting.

1.2   Planning to support the trainee teacher's individual needs and teaching experiences

The proportion of individual teaching and the point at which this commences will be determined by the mentor, using their professional judgement and having considered via a collaborative discussion with the trainee teacher the following:

- The prior experiences of the trainee teacher, e.g. whether s/he has spent considerable amount of time in schools already, perhaps as a teaching assistant, or teaching abroad. However, these are not indications that they will be able to understand the pedagogy of teaching, just that they are more confident around pupils.
- The trainee teacher's apparent levels of confidence (though be careful as this can mask ability!);
- An audit by the trainee teacher of the confidence of achieving of the professional standards for QTS. For example, a traffic light system could be adopted allowing the trainee teacher to consider which professional standards they are most concerned about and those with which they feel more confident at attaining quickly.
- An audit of the trainee teacher's subject skills, knowledge and understanding to establish what opportunities and training could be provided to develop weaker skills. For example, they might be a historian with a strong knowledge and understanding of the Tudor period but less experience of the American Civil War. The trainee teacher might be provided with an opportunity to teach an A level group aspects of the Tudor period, the mentor utilising this for their own professional development. The trainee teacher might also be given a specific aspect of the American Civil War which they could plan with the mentor and subsequently teach (whether individually or collaboratively). Audits of subject knowledge are particularly important with primary trainee teachers, in order to identify curriculum areas where the trainee teacher may have had less experience in their previous training. Ofsted (2009) has identified primary teachers' subject knowledge in non-core subjects as an area of continuing concern, and mentors should aim to provide additional training in these subject areas where possible.
- The range of opportunities available will be affected by the nature of the school. For example, the size of the school, the number of trainee teachers working in the school, the size of the department etc.
- Inducting the trainee teacher into the whole school and department/ phase/class (see 1.1.2).

1.2.1   Planning the timetable

Trainee teachers' timetables must be planned in negotiation with the trainee teacher and must provide them with appropriate opportunities across the age phase for which they are being trained in order to develop their teaching skills, knowledge and understanding and to support their further professional

development. This section outlines how a timetable can be constructed and what they could include. The most important aspects of a trainee teacher's timetable are that it should:

- Be planned to ensure that it is developmental - not 'in at the deep end' it should therefore encourage collaborative teaching activities (see 1.2.2);
- Be used flexibly in order to allow for focus on targets as they become apparent;
- Be sufficiently varied so as to provide age range and group ability experiences throughout the age phase for which the trainee teacher is being trained, on primary programmes this should be co-ordinated with age groups/phases experienced on previous placements where applicable.
- Provide opportunities for trainee teachers to work with more than one class in the same age range, so that there are opportunities to repeat lessons with different groups;
- Include time for personal development (i.e. developing subject area knowledge and skills and working on assignments);
- Allocated time for a dedicated weekly subject training meeting;
- A dedicated weekly meeting or training activity with other trainee teachers and NQTs organised by the Professional Mentors;
- Include time to make focused observations of other practitioners (see 1.3). These observations should be linked to the trainee teacher's developmental needs set at the weekly Mentor Meetings e.g. "increasing the range of formative assessment for learning strategies being deployed during lessons";
- Include non-subject based e.g. pastoral work, Form Tutor roles, extra-curricular activities.
- A second subject area if a requirement.

For further information refer to the Teach First mentors' website

1.2.2   Collaborative planning and teaching

Collaborative teaching at its best sets up forms of dialogue which are suited to a postmodern context in which all participants can learn from offering and receiving fragmentary knowledge and impressions which are acknowledged to be incomplete.

(Arthur J. et al: 1997, p.130 cited on the Teach First website Skills for Mentoring: The benefits of collaboration

Collaborative **planning and teaching** is useful particularly early in a placement as it helps the trainee teacher to understand the planning, teaching and assessing processes with the mentor or host teacher. It also allows the trainee teacher to consider the various teaching strategies and resources and classroom management techniques that could be adopted. Canterbury suggest that "As part of the 'scaffolding' approach to teacher training, the beginning teacher would initially work within the mentor's framework,

progressively taking on a wider range of teaching elements as their confidence and skills develop."

As such, collaboration can be in the form of:
- The mentor and trainee teachers planning the lessons together;
- The mentor checking the planning of the lesson planned by the trainee teacher;
- The mentor planning an aspect of the lesson but the trainee teacher actually taking that part of the lesson e.g. starter activity;
- The trainee teacher planning the lesson and this being taught by the mentor (particularly useful if the trainee teacher struggles with planning clear activities);
- The trainee teacher working with an identified individual/small group for part/all the lesson, e.g. taking a group of more/less able pupils, working 'one to one' with identified pupils in need of support,
- The trainee teacher taking the beginning or end of a lesson, introducing a significant element of subject knowledge to the group;
- The trainee teacher leading the lesson with the class teacher taking the role of teaching assistant - or vice versa.

Also see Arthur, J. et al (1997: 123-125)

It is important that, for collaboration to be successful, this is followed by collaborative discussion following the training activity (see 2.1.3 and Pearson, 2008: 57). However, there are also considerable benefits for trainees' learning if some dialogue also takes place during the lesson at the point of 'service delivery'. (Booth et al 1995) as key learning opportunities may be missed or forgotten in retrospective discussion

At a later stage in the placement, collaborative teaching might enable the mentor and trainee teacher to explore more challenging approaches to learning and teaching as more equal, co-investigators.

1.3   Observing other practitioners

An important aspect in becoming an able teacher is the process of learning from the observation of the practice of others (Pearson, 2008: 54-57). Opportunities, therefore, need to be provided for this to occur. This links closely with the target setting in that observation allows trainee teachers to analyse what is actually going on in the classroom. For example, how the space or time is being managed, what sort of questions are being asked, what the pupils are actually doing. It helps the trainee teacher to develop an understanding of acceptable standards for classroom teaching.. Observation of other practitioners allows the trainee teacher to broaden their knowledge of teaching, learning and assessment approaches to understand in what circumstances pupils will or will not achieve, and for trainee teachers to discover the ways in which teachers perceive and think about classroom

events (for more detail about focus of observations (see Pearson, 2008: 54-57 and Capel et al (2009:65-78). Trainee teachers should be supported in determining a focus for observation, and in developing a structure for note taking, or in using a given observation pro-forma

Part of such an activity needs to include an opportunity for the trainee teacher to discuss the observation with the person being observed though this needs to be managed sensitively, and trainee teachers may need to be supported in providing non-judgemental feedback, and in recognising that being observed may be stressful for any teacher, even those who are experienced. During, or after observation of their teaching, the mentor or other practitioner should be able to provide explicit commentary on aspects of their practice, and to engage the trainee teacher in asking questions about the strategies and resources used, and possible alternative approaches.

It will be important for the mentor or other experienced practitioner to acknowledge any challenges posed by the observed lesson and to discuss with trainee teachers the limitations of what they can reasonably be expected to achieve at their stage of professional development.

Also see Shaw (1995:106-107) and the Canterbury Teach First Mentoring Resources.

2.   Making observations and providing feedback

Carrying out observations is an important part of collecting evidence on how the trainee teacher is progressing in terms of meeting the QTS Standards and in providing the trainee teachers with an opportunity to reflect collaboratively on their practice via feedback sessions. Providers usually recommend the minimum number of weekly observations and it is important for mentors to become familiar with these requirements. Observing trainee teachers' practice involves:

•   Supporting the trainee teacher in analysing their practice
•   Examining values and views about teaching and learning
•   Ensuring that the trainee teacher addresses both successes and areas for development in the analysis
•   Providing constructive feedback, offering both support and challenge
•   Helping the trainee teacher to carry out action planning.

Observations can take a number of forms, the most common being the mentor observing the trainee teacher but **other observation activities** could include **joint observations** and **cross observations** and **moderation activities.** Before these are discussed it is vital to understand how to conduct

an observation and the planning that is involved prior to this and the follow-up session.

2.1   The observation process

It must be emphasised that mentors cannot merely turn up to a lesson unannounced to observe a lesson and then leave afterwards feeding back at some later date.

There is absolutely no point to observation without critical analysis, so 'general', impressionistic observations should be avoided. The whole notion of 'mentoring' places the emphasis on negotiation and consensual planning, and 'surprise' observations don't allow for this. The process of identifying a focus ties in with the experiential learning cycle of {planning - implementing - reviewing}, and as such makes it vital for the student to be involved in setting the focus, feeding from any previous targets set. Feimann-Nemser et al: 1993 shows that priorities set by a mentor alone are likely to be ignored by a student, if they do not coincide with their own. [Brooks and Sikes: 1997; p.101-103, 130-131]

from:The Teach First Mentors' Website

This also links into the points above about adult learning theories, such as the learner being the driving force in target-setting. Therefore, the whole observation process must be well planned and organised and be though a dialogue with the individual who is being observed. There are three stages to consider: **planning the observation, conducting the observation** itself and the **collaborative discussion** following this.

2.1.1   Planning the observation (also refer to Fish (2005:ch.5) and Teach First Mentors' Website)

- Negotiate with the trainee teacher the focus of the observation for example, based on clusters of the Professional Standards for QTS and/or building on previous observations and discussions.
- If observing a lesson, establish its intended learning objectives and outcomes (what the expected learning will be for pupils in the lesson and how the trainee teacher will know that pupils have shown progress in the pupils' learning), what this is building on (previous assessment and evaluative evidence) and the tasks, activities and resources that pupils will access and the rational for these.
- If another activity is being observed, for example assessment feedback to pupils or parents, an extra-curricular activity or similar, ensure the resources required are available and relevant.

2.1.2   Conducting the observation (also refer to Fish (2005:ch.5) and
Teach First Mentors' Website)

- Procedure 2.1.1 must be followed.
- Arrive before the lesson and ensure all documentation required for completion is available (e.g. a copy of the plan, worksheets, observation record, professional standards or other assessment criteria). This is important as the observer should be as unobtrusive as possible to avoid distracting the activity being observed unnecessarily.
- Observe the trainee teacher using the relevant observation form against the areas negotiated.
- Try to sit in an unobtrusive area of the room and do not interrupt the lesson or distract pupils.
- When making observation notes, focus on positive attributes demonstrated wherever possible providing detail of specific examples of these in relation to the Professional Standards for QTS or other criteria being used.
- Clearly identify areas which the trainee teacher needs to develop or work on in relation to the Professional Standards for QTS or other criteria being used providing examples.
- Try to avoid making any facial expressions which the trainee teacher might interpret as disapproval or being too stern. Early on, however trainee teachers might want reassurance and so keep looking towards the observer In this case a smile can help.
- If the trainee teacher is monitoring individual or group work, try to follow these procedures remaining as unobtrusive as possible.
- Unless the lesson is clearly not going well, the observer should not attempt to communicate with pupils in the lesson unless it is to establish if pupils know and understand what they are doing. For example, the observer must not use the start or end of the lesson to remind pupils about a future activity. If this is required, this should be planned for the trainee teacher to do this before the lesson. Similarly, the observer should not attempt to help collect work, issue resources or such like as this should be part of the activity. (Also: Teach First Mentors' Website)
- Stay for the complete lesson or for the negotiated part of the lesson (for example, it could be that the focus was just the starter though this is not usual).

2.1.3   Collaborative discussion

Collaborative discussion (also referred to as debriefing, feedback or as discursive mentoring (Arthur et al (1997)) following an observation will help the mentor and the trainee teacher to identify where progress has been made and what the next training and development activities might be. This process will also support the trainee teacher in developing a self-evaluative, reflective approach to their teaching. To hold an effective and meaningful discussion:

- Meet the same day, preferably as soon after the lesson as is possible so that details are fresh in everybody's mind.
- It is useful to encourage the trainee teacher to make their own brief written evaluation of pupils' learning and their own learning and developmental needs before the meeting, e.g. by annotating their lesson plan.
- Sit somewhere quiet and private but comfortable with a table and some refreshment to make the atmosphere as relaxed as possible (tissues are also a good idea).
- Encourage the trainee teacher to give his/her own verbal evaluation first. Be prepared to ask probing questions to encourage their reflection and encourage the trainee teacher to focus on positive aspects of their progress and on pupils' learning. This

- Allows a release of tension, allowing the trainee teacher to listen afterwards.
- Gives the observer an insight into what the trainee teacher really understood.
- Allows the observer to adjust their comments appropriately.

- Next verbally give good points arising from the observation using the word 'I' rather than to say 'you'. This

- Helps to encourage the trainee teacher.
- Improves the trainee teacher's receptivity to criticisms.
- Indicates that it is the observer's opinion and not a cosmetic judgement.

- Aim to only discuss the previously agreed focuses for the observation using focused questioning allowing the trainee teacher an opportunity to respond and to defend actions.
- Celebrate successes identifying what the trainee teacher has done well providing specific examples but drawing out how these could be developed further.
- Select a maximum of no more than **three** areas which the trainee teacher needs to develop / work on. Other points of improvement can come later. Some providers have devised standards progress forms and these are useful to help set developmental targets.
- Provide examples of and identify further training opportunities making sure trainee teacher knows how to meet the targets (e.g. by identifying which resources / materials could be used in future lessons, which teachers to observe, any books / writing on the specific areas discussed, etc).
- Recap the good points of the observation and summarise learning.
- Encourage the trainee teacher to set his/her own focus for future observations and analysis at the same time ensuring that the standards are covered.
- It is vitally important that the observer **passes their observation notes to the trainee teacher as soon after the observation as possible.** It is

advised that a copy is retained by the mentor for quality assurance purposes and to support the weekly meeting which should be a separate meeting.

Also refer to:

Teach First Mentors' Website

2.2   Other observation activities

2.2.1   Joint observations

Joint observations of teaching can be made together by the subject /class mentor with either the professional mentor, provider tutor or a host teacher. These are a useful procedure to standardise procedures in the school and to assess the effectiveness of the training, to agree the progress of the trainee teacher and to support the mentor where deficiencies have become apparent.

2.2.2   Cross Observation

Cross Observation is where two mentors or trainee teachers from different subjects / classes observe a trainee teacher from other class / subject area and lead subsequent evaluative discussions. For example:

Music Mentor and / or music Trainee Teacher   Music Trainee Teacher

Maths Mentor and / or maths Trainee Teacher   Maths Trainee Teacher
(from: TTA (2003).

The problem of same subject observations is that subject specialists can often focus on subject specific issues and ignore the wider picture. Therefore, the benefits of cross observations are that non-specialist observers can focus on the wider picture and that it encourages the observer to see standards of trainee teachers and teaching and learning strategies in other subject areas i.e. planning, delivery, management , knowledge and understanding and is thus a good continuing professional development activity for the observer too. Similarly, in primary schools, mentors from different age phases may provide a different perspective on aspects of learning and teaching, although there may also be benefits to be gained by organising observation of the trainee teacher by a colleague with specific subject expertise different from that of the usual mentor.

2.2.3   Moderation activities

As with joint observations, moderation activities are a useful to ensure the mentoring procedures in the placement are standardised and for the moderator to assess the effectiveness of the training, to agree the progress of the trainee teacher or to support the mentor where areas requiring development have become apparent. This moderation can be by the Professional Mentor, the subject mentor if moderating the host teacher, or the provider tutor. They can include moderation of observations, the debriefing process or other training activities such as the **weekly meeting.**

Also refer to Arthur, J. et al (1997: 123-125) and Teach First Mentors' Website

3.   Evaluating, reviewing and reflecting

Good teachers continually develop theories about what it is they are doing and by using evaluation and reviewing techniques, trainee teachers can be encouraged to identify ways to improve their practice through evaluation, reviewing and target setting.

3.1.1   Evaluating lessons

Evaluating lessons can help the trainee teacher to record the journey through their development and allows trainee teachers to review their thoughts and to refer back to earlier practice and experiences (Pearson, 2008: 57). It is important that an evaluation is made of the lesson as soon as the lesson is complete and as with observing other practitioners or being observed themselves, it is important to have a clear focus for this evaluation, related to the Professional Standards for QTS or other agreed criteria. The trainee teacher should be attempt to evaluate the lesson honestly (this should be analytical rather than a descriptive diary of events) and to be reflective and analytical. For example, commenting on achievement of learning outcomes, referring to supporting evidence, assessing if the pupils achieved the learning objectives and outcomes, identifying factors facilitating or impeding realisation of the learning objectives (i.e. teaching methods, level of work, resources, classroom management), identifying targets for pupil learning in the next lesson and finally Identifying the trainee teacher's own personal progress against their personal targets.

3.1.2   Reviewing and Reflecting

McIntyre (1993) suggests that "reflection is fundamentally bound up by considerations about the role of theory in initial teacher education" (p37) while Dewey (1910 in Furlong and Maynard, 1995: 39) states that a reflective action is "the active persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it". Progress reviews

or reflections should be made regularly by the trainee teacher drawing on their observations of other practitioners, observations made of themselves and their own evaluations of their own teaching and their own reading around the issues being discussed. These reflections should be based on the focus area identified in meetings with the mentor and targets set and should be discussed in next weekly mentor meetings. It is also useful for mentors and trainee teachers to identify appropriate articles and publications on the focus being made and the trainee teachers should be persuaded to use their reading to support their review and to encourage them to be critically reflective and to consider what other actions could be taken in the future.

By thinking about events, the observed person achieves a greater awareness of self and an increased understanding of how he or she enacts the role of school leader. This awareness and understanding encompasses areas such as personal values and priorities, theoretical and applied knowledge, preferred modes if action and strengths and limitations one brings to the leadership tasks.

(Barnett, 1990, in Kortman and Honaker, 2002:25-6)

As such learning to reflect is a central part of learning to teach (Furlong and Maynard, 1995).

3.2.1   Weekly subject or phase meetings

Weekly meetings with the subject / class mentor are essential for identifying, building upon and extending, the trainee teacher's knowledge and experience gained throughout training. They are a focused and honest discussion between the mentor and trainee teacher with a constructive balance of strengths and areas for development. It should enable the collation and review of observations, the trainee teacher's own evaluations and reflections and building on collaborative discussions made following observations and enable the noting of achievements made and allow for the setting future targets. Weekly meetings should involve clear target setting and review opportunities but it must be emphasised that mentors should encourage theoretical underpinning to encourage meaningful reflection. Weekly meetings could be structured by:

- Identifying a clear focus for the meeting
- Making a joint review of previous targets and progress using the trainee teacher's lesson evaluations, in-depth review, observations and reflections on the teaching of others and any reading made to support discussion and to identify future training and development needs.
- Assessing the main achievements made over the week and the evidence available supports these?
- Collaboratively identifying further targets for development, though not too many and ensuring these are SMART, that is specific, measurable (referenced to clear criteria), achievable, realistic and with a timescale for attainment of this. It is important that the Trainee teacher is not asked to

focus on too much at once and that the challenge is appropriate and that training opportunities or relevant reading references are identified.

- As part of formative assessment, these discussions should be linked to the QTS Standards and ensure evidence is collated and logged as appropriate

It is easy for mentors to be distracted from these meetings but it is vital that they are not cancelled. If they must be cancelled they must be rearranged as soon as possible if the mentoring role and process is to be wholly successful and the trainee teacher is supported fully. Additional meetings with or arranged by Professional Mentors usually involve groups of trainee teachers sometimes with NQTs. Such generic mentor meetings could focus on issues including:

- Planning learning objectives and outcomes including differentiation
- Pastoral issues (personal, social, health and citizenship issues)
- Applying for a teaching post providing advice of interview techniques and writing letters of application;
- Preparing for involvement in parents' evenings;
- Understanding national frameworks and initiatives including the Every Child Matters agenda, 14-19 agenda, personalised learning, the primary curriculum;
- Understanding the implications of research reports such as the Williams mathematical review and Rose report;
- Inclusion and diversity issues including supporting children with special educational needs (SEN), gifted and talented pupils and pupils for whom English is an additional language and other cultural and gender issues;
- Assessing, monitoring, reporting and recording and analysing data and report writing;
- Organising school trips and visits;
- Behaviour, classroom, resource and time management;
- Working with outside agencies

(source: University of Huddersfield Mentor support CD)

For further support refer to [Teach First Mentors' Website](#)

4 Supporting trainee teachers' individual needs

4.1 Enhancing the progress of trainee teachers whose professional development is accelerating rapidly

Trainee teachers vary in their ability and some are stronger than others but all need to be aware of their progress towards achieving QTS which is concerned with development towards being the best classroom practitioner possible. It is not the simplistic accruing of evidence for a portfolio and therefore good or outstanding trainee teachers should not be allowed to 'coast' and to be satisfied with their practice and evidence gained so far. Such

trainee teachers should be challenged to achieve more which will clearly impact on pupil learning and achievement. Thus, the training programme should:

- emphasise the need for continual and rigorous self reflection, evaluation and self development, as a basis for continuing development for all teachers, including the most experienced and capable
- focus increasingly on higher order teaching skills and subject pedagogy and they should be encouraged to undertake wider research and to reflect upon this in terms of their own practice
- involve self-audit of , and reflection on subject knowledge, taking their understanding beyond the immediate needs of the placement
- ensure that targets set are substantive and challenging
- encourage such trainee teachers to take risks and move beyond their comfort zone.

For further information refer to:

Skills for Mentoring: When professional development is accelerating rapidly to QTS and beyond   and   Skills for Mentoring: Students who are making relatively slow progress to QTS   and   Skills for Mentoring: Slower progress to QTS - case studies

4.2   Enhancing the progress of trainee teachers who are experiencing difficulties in their teaching

Trainee teachers vary in their ability and for some progress towards achieving QTS is slower than that of others and they are sometimes unfairly labelled as weak. However, "weaker" does not mean "will never make it", though it might initially appear unlikely but it does refer to a trainee teacher who is trying their best in circumstances they find difficult or unfamiliar, and is therefore deserving of our support. This help must not be at the expense of harming pupils' overall progress, making excessive demands on the Mentor, putting unreasonable stress upon the trainee teacher, or damaging to the Partnership. Weaker trainee teachers can take a disproportionately large amount of Mentor's time so to prevent this, there is a need to use the existing provider's procedures fully.

Early intervention for trainee teachers who are experiencing difficulties in their teaching is vital and weaknesses should be identified and recorded in writing. Appropriate support and training opportunities need to be planned, clear timescales and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Precise written SMART targets (see 3.2.1) are essential and exit strategies should be clearly defined and agreed. It is important to inform all parties of the issues so that maximum support can be given via a suitable training programme. This can include:

- reducing the teaching time but gradually increasing the trainee teacher's teaching load when it is appropriate to do so and slowly taking away the support as their confidence increases

- Collaborative planning, teaching and evaluation, gradually increasing the trainee teacher's responsibilities as their confidence develops
- modelling teaching (though it is important trainee teachers develop their individuality and do not mimic their mentors)
- directing the trainee teacher to undertake lesson observations with a specific focus so as to help them improve areas for development.

It is vital that regular written records are kept and that these are discussed by the mentor with the trainee teacher. As with all mentoring activities, mentors need to be positive <u>and</u> honest with the trainee teacher about their progress in relation to the Professional Standards.

4.3   **To summarise the article,** good mentoring practice is relating theory and practice. It is more than just giving advice or overseeing practice. Wilkin (1992) suggests that it "must mean systematic support of the trainee teacher in the long road of professional development and this means helping the trainee teacher to see the links between theory and practice, since only if this is accomplished will the trainee teacher be able to establish the principles of practice or rules of teaching' which will enable children to learn" (p67).

The most effective mentor takes account of a number of areas which include:
- Establishing and maintaining a professional, trusting and supportive relationship with the trainee teacher
- Being familiar with the trainee teacher's background including previous experiences and knowledge and be able to capitalise on any strengths and skills the trainee teacher might already have
- Identifying areas for development to enable the planning and implementation of a programme of regular support and training

Commentaries on selected online resource:

The Montors' Online Support System

This is a superb site which offers guidance and examples of effective mentoring strategies that can be adopted. It includes case studies and video clips, resources, forms and reflective activities for mentors to use to enhance their mentoring skills and practices. The resource also provides guidance on trainee teachers observing other practitioners, on observing trainee teachers themselves, debriefing the trainee teacher and target setting. In addition it provides guidance on how to work, plan teach and evaluate collaboratively, and how to organise and conduct a weekly meeting and provides advice and guidance for working with stronger and weaker trainee teachers.

Glossary of terms

Host Teacher	One who supports the mentor or mentor process, i.e. form tutor, other subject specialist
Initial Teacher Education (also ITT)	ITE
Initial Teacher Training (also ITE)	ITT
Mentee	Trainee Teacher, Training Participant', 'Beginning Teacher' etc.
Professional Mentor	ITT coordinator, usually a senior teacher in a school that oversees mentoring and training of all trainee teachers
Provider	The organisation to which the trainee teacher is affiliated. This could be a school or EBITT for GTP trainee teachers, SCITT or HEI for PGCE trainee teachers or HEI for BA / BEd trainee teachers
Qualified Teacher Status	QTS
Special Educational Needs	SEN
Student	Mentee, Trainee Teacher, Training Participant', 'Beginning Teacher' etc.
Subject / Class Mentor	The main person supporting individual trainee teacher's progress in subject or year phases
Teacher Training Agency (now TDA)	TTA
Trainee Teacher'	Mentee, Training Participant', 'Beginning Teacher' etc.
Training and Development Agency for Schools (Formerly TTA)	TDA

Glossary item written by

Dr Lesley-Anne Pearson **with contributions from** Dr Viv Wilson **&** David Cameron

Key Resources including links where available:

Denby, N. (Ed) (2008) *How to Achieve your QTS: a guide for Students* London: Sage

DfES (2005) National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching: DCSF Principles of Mentoring and Coaching

DfES (2006) 'Coaching in secondary schools' (DVD-ROM), *Secondary National Strategy for School Improvement* Norwich: DfES.
A behaviour4Learning glossary item on the wider meaning of the term mentoring Behaviour4Learning glossary

Resources for Mentors in relation to diversity

Multiverse:

Resources for Mentoring: ITE Providers and Schools

TTRB:

The Tutors, Mentors and Trainers browse category

Teach First

The 'Mentors' Online Support System', provided by Canterbury Christ Church University as part of the Teach First National ITT Partnership

Open University:

supporting mentoring in ITT

TDA (2007) *Developing trainees' subject knowledge for teaching*

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Behaviour4Learning: Mentoring

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Yorkshire and Humber Regional Generic Mentoring Handbook (2007)

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Keywords

mentoring, ITE

Related Articles

- [Research into subject specific mentoring on the PGCE science course at the Institute of Education, University of London, in the academic year 2004/5 (R&DA 2: 16)](#)
- [CPD for Teachers – Mentoring and Coaching](#)
- [Teachers TV: Coaching and Mentoring Week](#)

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