



The next move

Delivering a world-class leadership development and teacher training programme

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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are the views only of Teach First.

Introduction

Millions of British children live in poverty and only one in three is likely to achieve basic school grades. Yet twice as many of their wealthier peers do so. Teach First was founded to change this inequality.

However, we know that educational inequality is too deeply an entrenched problem for teachers to tackle on their own. Not only does our society need fantastic teachers in schools in low-income communities, it also needs school leaders, social entrepreneurs, policy makers and business leaders who, like us, refuse to accept that disadvantage determines destiny.

So that is why Teach First has a unique role and focus within education. We empower people to change this inequality by developing individuals to be highly effective teachers for schools serving low-income communities whilst simultaneously growing a movement of leaders to tackle the problem within classrooms, schools and across society.

At the very heart of Teach First's approach is our Leadership Development Programme, through which we recruit and train talented individuals to teach and lead in the country's most challenging schools.

Teach First's ambition has always been to deliver the highest-quality training through this two-year scheme. And evidence from independent research¹ and feedback from our Ofsted inspections² confirms that our existing programme is highly effective.

We are proud that our teachers are seven times more likely to be in senior school leadership positions and three times more likely to be teaching in challenging schools³. But our ambition is for our training and support to become world-leading so we can more quickly achieve our overarching vision: a day when no child's educational success is limited by their socio-economic background. And, by listening to our participants, partner schools and universities over the last 13 years, we've always known that we still had work to do to improve it.

So in 2014 we began a major research project to better understand the most effective ways to train those on our programme – whom we refer to as 'participants' – and to create a pipeline of leaders who can support pupils from low-income communities. We have drawn on the work of the world's most effective systems, learnt from the most thorough evidence and listened to the feedback of our partners and teachers over the years since we began our work.

And we've done this because we want all of our participants to not only reach a baseline level of good practice, but to have access to the best possible support and training so they can have a transformative effect on their pupils' learning, be equipped to support a self-improving system and have the skills to lead wider efforts to tackle educational inequality.

¹ Matched panel data estimates of the impact of Teach First on school and departmental performance, Rebecca Allen, September 2013

² [Ofsted inspections of Teach First](#), January 2016

³ [The careers of Teach First Ambassadors who remain in teaching: job choices, promotion and school quality](#), Education Datalab, July 2016

Encouragingly we have heard similar calls from our partner schools and universities. And in our most recent Ofsted report they recommended that we explore how to give participants continued support, and increased exposure to a wider range of teaching experiences throughout their time on our programme.

Our research has also taken place within a wider movement across the teacher training landscape. There have been calls for clearer links between schools and universities in the delivery of teacher training, a greater focus on core content for all trainee teachers and a longer, smoother transition between initial training and ongoing development. These proposed changes have been influenced both by the high-profile Carter and Munday reviews into teacher training, and align closely with the Department for Education's aims for teacher training in England, as outlined in the 2016 Education Excellence Everywhere government White Paper.

The result of our research is the biggest change in our training programme since our first intake of trainees in 2003, which we outline from page 7.

And whilst we know that the Teach First model is a unique teaching and leadership development programme, in this report we wanted to share the background and research that underpins our new model with the wider sector. After all, our collective ambition is to ensure every teacher in the country is effectively trained and supported, so every pupil can best fulfil their potential. We hope this is a positive contribution to that much wider effort.

The existing Teach First model and curriculum philosophy

Teach First's focus is on developing individuals so they can make an immediate and positive contribution to the issue of educational inequality. Our participants are trained and supported to teach in a partner school for two years, developing a personal experience and deep understanding of the nature of educational disadvantage in order to foster a lifelong commitment to ending this inequality in schools and beyond. In that time, they also learn how they can most effectively work with our national network to help solve problems.

At the centre of our current model is a unique partnership between Teach First, our partner universities and the schools with which we work. Each has a distinctive, but complementary, role to play in delivering our programme, right from the initial training delivered at the residential Summer Institute and throughout the two-year scheme.

Broad programme structure

Teach First's current Leadership Development Programme is a two-year, on-the-job training scheme that begins with a residential training course called Summer Institute.

From September, our trainees teach from day one, while being closely observed and receiving intensive support.

During their first year, our trainees set their own personal vision for their pupils and work towards a PGCE (worth 60 Masters-level credits) and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) with the help of mentors within their schools, subject and professional support from partner university tutors and their Teach First Leadership Development Officers.

In their second year they continue working in their placement school as qualified teachers, further developing their leadership skills and learning through a range of different opportunities, achieving their vision for their pupils and preparing to lead upon completion of the programme both in and outside of the classroom.

Upon successful completion of the programme, participants become part of our ever-growing community of Teach First 'ambassadors', which is on track to be 10,000 strong by 2019.

Programme curriculum

The core content of our existing programme curriculum is uniquely anchored around three interlocking themes. We believe each of these elements is critical in order to achieve our vision:

- **Teaching and Learning:** Delivered throughout our programme, and through our partnerships with universities and schools, we help our teachers to develop crucial teaching and learning skills to meet required standards and support their pupils to make rapid and sustained progress.
 - **Leadership:** Interwoven from the outset, but taking a more primary role in the second year of the programme, this strand of our curriculum enables our trainees to enhance their leadership, communication and influencing abilities to help them to manage people, thrive in challenging circumstances and implement a plan to achieve their vision.
- Movement:** Participants are supported through their development by a Teach First Leadership Development Officer across both years. Through coaching and a range of events, they are inspired to broaden their impact in the classroom by engaging with the wider Teach First movement, both within and outside of the local area in which they are placed, including ambassadors and other Teach First employees. This helps them build an understanding of the need to engage with people across sectors to end educational inequality.

Research conducted for this project

Teach First's Research, Evaluation and Impact (REI) team worked closely with our Curriculum Design team to conduct the following research to inform our redesigned training:

- 107 interviews with Teach First participants, ambassadors, mentors, tutors and Leadership Development Officers to better understand the support roles that currently exist around participants.
- 29 participant case studies to learn more about the causes of Teach First participant retention, withdrawal and issues encountered on the programme.
- Interviews and focus groups with 30 Teach First ambassadors who have completed our Masters programme.
- Analysis of over 30 video interviews with Teach First teachers and the pupils they taught.
- Correlation analysis of a participant's Teach First Assessment Centre score and data collected on the progress of the pupils they taught.
- Correlation analysis of Teach First withdrawals and school characteristics.
- In-depth interviews with Teach First ambassadors, teachers, global education experts and leaders from a range of sectors on what we can learn from other methods and systems for training people to be leaders at the start of their careers.
- Literature reviews around:
 - What do we know about how to predict who will become a good teacher?
 - What is the relationship between individual talent, context and high performance?
 - What is great early career professional development for teachers and what do we know about the best way to deliver it?
 - What is the best way to prepare teachers for teaching effectively in classrooms?

Summary of research findings

Given the lack of a single authoritative review of teacher training, we decided to select ideas from across different reviews only where we found independent and overlapping sources of evidence. To further refine the findings, and ensure they were suitable for the current UK context and the unique demands of the Teach First programme, we also cross-referenced this research with internal primary research. Only findings that were common across all these sources were deemed to meet the required standard, and an overview of this evidence is presented below.

Findings: Initial preparation and support for participants

Content

Our research suggests that there are a small number of key ‘gatekeeper’ skills that all teachers need in order to begin teaching as a competent practitioner, the most important being: **classroom management, assessment and planning**.

- Equipping our participants with a solid command of these skills allows them to “concentrate on deeper pedagogical and leadership development content and to pursue profound classroom impact faster”⁴ as they develop over the rest of our programme.
- The literature on teacher training makes clear that the most powerful way for teachers to learn these skills is providing them with opportunities to practise the techniques they are being taught soon after receiving theoretical instruction. The importance of this is because “learning to teach requires building relationships with learners, and it is here that one learns how to teach - as students act back and responses must be tailored to their actions.”⁵
- It is also important that trainees receive feedback on their performance, with opportunities for ongoing development. As Grossman et al say: “learning about a method or learning to justify a method is not the same thing as learning to do the method with a class of students”⁶.
- Furthermore, our research shows the importance of participants developing their own vision for their classes early on in their training. However, some told us that they would rather focus on their teaching skills at the start of the career. Our research also indicates that the abstract concept of having ‘a vision’ can also be confusing.
- Our research, however, makes it clear that the reason high-performing teachers value a vision is because it helps them translate their core motivation into tangible aims for their pupils and inform their day-to-day practice. This is especially true around planning and assessment. As such, a clear and coherent vision should not be seen as separate to teaching skills, as it currently is, but as a vital component, providing the driving force through which a teacher – likely to be facing a challenging placement – develops a coherent framework of planning and assessment.

⁴ Lessons from Spotlight Thought Paper for Moving the Mean, Knowledge Management

⁵ Redefining Teaching Grossman et al

⁶ Redefining Teaching Grossman et al

Delivery settings

- For many of the same reasons, participants should also practise these approaches in settings that get them close to real classrooms and pupils. This should be directly through placements in schools, and indirectly through, for example, exposure to video, samples of pupils' work and teacher planning.
- A focus on helping participants experience and understand more about the communities in which they will teach is also strongly recommended.

Findings: Teaching support during the programme

Participants consistently identified becoming effective in basic teaching skills, such as behaviour management, as being the greatest challenge they face at the start of their teaching career. Even allowing for a greater preparation in the basic 'gatekeeper' skills, participants indicated they still required additional support with their teaching practice early in their career. Participants emphasised the need for this support to come from someone who is experienced in teacher development and available to them when they need it. This is backed-up by research literature into beginning teacher development, which emphasises that teachers with access to good support networks⁷ and with more supportive peers⁸ become better teachers faster.

In-school support

- All Teach First participants work in schools serving the lowest-income communities and / or in areas of historic underperformance. These factors can place extra strain on a school's resources, so it's important our model and the support we provide to the schools takes this into account.
- For many of our participants, the support they receive to become an effective teacher is provided by an experienced teacher from the same department they will be teaching in, a role we call the subject mentor.
- We found that, where the subject mentor is well prepared, understands the Teach First model and is given adequate time by their senior leadership team to invest in developing the Teach First participant, our teachers feel well supported. Our tracking data (such as Qualified Teaching Status scores and withdrawal rates) also indicate that well-supported participants develop into effective teachers.
- When subject mentors struggle, either in terms of capacity or capability, then participants are more likely to struggle.

University support

- University tutors are generally perceived positively by Teach First participants, with the majority of them describing at least one of their tutors (participants are supported by a mix of professional and subject tutors) very favourably.

⁷ Ronfeldt, 2012

⁸ Supovitz 2009

- Participants appreciate the expert support in teaching that tutors provide and the reassurance they gain from having someone visit the school who is “on their side”⁹ and has “credibility”¹⁰ with other school staff.
- Many tutors felt that they could better support a participant if the support they provide wasn’t all focused on the participant’s first year. Tutors would prefer to have the flexibility to provide some support to participants in their second year.
- However, the value to the participant mostly comes from one tutor. In situations where only one tutor is strong, participants do not feel any less supported, or feel less able as teachers, than in situations where more than one tutor is strong.

Teach First support

- Teach First currently provides participants support through Leadership Development Officers. These are qualified teachers employed by Teach First to provide coaching to facilitate the development of a participant’s leadership skills. We found that Leadership Development Officers are generally viewed positively for the pastoral support they provide in the first year. Many participants did, however, emphasise that they receive leadership coaching at a time when they would value teaching expertise more highly.

With such a range of support roles around each participant, there is also a lack of clarity in terms of who is ultimately responsible for a participant’s development.

While our research shows that – where the support roles are working well – the Teach First model is highly effective, it also revealed more flexibility is required to respond to the most challenging situations. This was particularly true when a mentor is either not able to invest the required time into teacher development, or when they are not as effective at mentoring. All our Leadership Development Officers are qualified teachers, and are recruited as leadership coaches rather than as a teacher developer. They are not expected to have the skills or experience to fully support a struggling teacher who should be receiving this support from their school. Many tutors do great work in stepping in to help as often as they can to support participants facing these problems. But, ultimately, they cannot visit all individual participants frequently enough to make this a viable solution for the entire network.

Findings: Longer-term development

Our research clearly indicates that effective post-qualification professional development for teachers requires considerable time that must be well organised, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on subject content or pedagogy, or both.

This means it is important to build on our continued support for Teach First participants after they complete their initial QTS year, to ensure they keep developing.

While the research did not reveal any particular set of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities that can be easily packaged up for schools, it did reveal there are four key areas of teaching to focus on, and that there are also key aspects in how to structure any support provided:

⁹ Support Roles Review, Strategic Analysis

¹⁰ Support Roles Review, Strategic Analysis

Subject knowledge

A systematic review of over 1,300 published research papers on teacher CPD found that only nine studies met the appropriate international standards of reliable research as set out by the US Department of Education¹¹. However, these nine studies showed “remarkable”¹² consistency in identifying that the most effective CPD in terms of pupil progress was “focused on specific subject-related content or pedagogic practices.”¹³ The research identified that the most effective subject-specific CPD:

- Focused on enhancing a teacher’s knowledge of the subject, the key concepts and organising principles of the subject, and – especially where students are likely to struggle – how to teach the difficult areas.
- Involved external expertise (from outside the school, not necessarily outside teaching) delivering clear and coherent training courses to provide opportunities for teachers to practice what they had learned, receive feedback on it and modify their practice in light of further instruction (a one-off workshop approach was “wasteful”¹⁴).

Teaching and learning techniques and pedagogy

As teachers become more confident in their teaching they should be given an opportunity to experiment with their teaching practices. The research reviewed found that no particular pedagogy was a “silver bullet”¹⁵ with all having strengths and weaknesses that were appropriate for certain situations and not others. Rather, it is about teachers being given the time and space to reflect on their own teaching (ideally with expert guidance) and find ways to develop certain pedagogical practices they identify as either requiring further work, or a particular area of strength they wish to continue to develop in. In addition, our research found:

- There is a need for participants to continue to receive subject and academic support, and to be observed into their second (NQT) year. The overwhelming majority of interviewees stated that they need to observe great teaching to become outstanding practitioners themselves¹⁶. This need for continued development was also picked up by Ofsted as something for Teach First to focus on. However, for many of our participants – particularly those placed in schools that are rated poorly by Ofsted – it can be difficult for them to find ways to observe a range of great teaching.
- The most effective Teach First teachers also emphasised that building deep and meaningful relationships with pupils is important to achieve truly impactful teaching. The research found that nearly all participants are aware that this is important, but they “don’t always know how to

¹¹ What Works Clearinghouse, Procedures and Standards Handbook

¹² What works in professional development, Guskey and Yoon

¹³ What works in professional development, Guskey and Yoon

¹⁴ What works in professional development, Guskey and Yoon

¹⁵ Preparing Teachers for a Changing World, Darling-Hammond and Bransford

¹⁶ Support Roles Review, Strategic Analysis

build strong relationships without undermining their authority”¹⁷ and need support in understanding how to do this.

Research and study skills

Teachers need to be given the opportunity to develop research skills in order to critically evaluate studies into teaching practice, conduct their own research projects, approach their development critically and accurately identify the most appropriate way for them to find answers to their questions. This is important because “to develop their practice and improve as teachers, novices must learn to use their practice as a site for [inquiry](#)”¹⁸. This means turning struggle into questions that can be investigated, tested and studied, and then framing new questions to develop further. “Such work depends on skills of observation and analysis and the dispositions to seek evidence, take risks and remain open to different [interpretations](#).”¹⁹

Learning research techniques would also allow them to actively participate in debates about teaching and to apply “selective pressure” on ideas in education through investigating for themselves what approaches they should (or should not) be taking to improve the learning of the children they teach.

Findings: Ongoing development of leadership skills

- Our Masters degree research shows that different ambassadors had different experiences and expectations of ‘leadership’, and their leadership pathways took many different routes and did not necessarily result in a formal leadership position.
- As teachers become more established as professionals they naturally begin to take on more of a leadership role in their schools. Indeed, what ambassadors want from our training programme is not to learn generic ‘leadership skills’ – which may not be relevant to their stage of development – but ongoing support in naturally developing as leaders through the experience of overcoming the everyday challenges in their respective organisations.
- They also value the opportunity to network with role models further on in their careers to help them shape their careers and address educational inequality both inside and outside of the classroom.

¹⁷ Lessons from Spotlight, Knowledge Development

¹⁸ Ball and Cohen, Developing Practice, Developing Practitioners

¹⁹ From Preparation to Practice, Sharon Feiman-Nemser

Overview of our new training programme

From our research it is clear that the skills and experience required to deliver a programme with the level of ambition and impact we want already exists within Teach First and its partner schools and universities, suggesting that our collaborative approach is fundamentally correct.

There is an important role for all institutions in the delivery of our programme – drawing on expertise across each sector, but bringing them together in a coherent and planned way. However, our research also indicates that we need to make some important changes to the overall structure of our scheme if we want it to become world-leading and drive further improvement to our training.

The changes outlined below represent the biggest improvement we've ever made to our training.

Expanded qualification

We will expand the remit and quality of our training by introducing a new, bespoke two-year qualification – a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Worth double the value of a PGCE it fully integrates teacher training with leadership development into a single qualification spread over two years. This will be the first two-year PGDE offered in England.

- For the first time we will integrate our training, so that teacher training and leadership development sit together from the outset. This reflects our unique focus on developing individuals who can lead efforts to tackle educational inequality within classrooms, the wider education sector and across society.
- To deliver a successful 'school-led' system, we need to be planning to make sure training we give to new entrants sets up this pipeline and embeds the necessary knowledge, skills and mindset from the start.
- Worth 120 Masters-level credits, we believe the PGDE qualification – which will still lead to QTS after the first year – will reflect the increased status teaching deserves, and will enable participants to become research-informed practitioners demonstrating deep and sustained engagement with the best teaching and leadership research and practice.
- All participants will have the option to 'top-up' their PGDE qualification to a full Masters degree by achieving an additional 60 credits.

Subject-specific support from university partners will be provided to our participants over the full two years of our Leadership Development Programme to further develop the expertise and impact of our teachers.

- As our research findings showed, attempting to "cram" all the subject-specific training participants need into a single year is sub-optimal and leads to participants receiving content they can't fully engage with in their first year.
- We will now spread this tutor support over the full two years of our training. This will allow us to better sequence what gets taught to our participants to ensure it aligns with their development as teachers, and provides a more even distribution of support over the entire programme. This should also ensure a more balanced workload.
- In addition, we will increase support across the two years for participants to develop research literacy. We know this is something participants have consistently said they want and our research suggests it will also help them to become more effective teachers and leaders. As research institutions and specialist centres of subject knowledge, our university partners will now have this clear remit within the new programme.

Initial preparation and support for participants

From 2017 we will re-order our two-year curriculum so that Summer Institute will be focused on providing Teach First participants with a grounding in the key areas of classroom management, assessment and planning.

- While we don't suggest these three areas alone are sufficient for great teaching, great teaching cannot happen without these elements in place.
- We will re-order our curriculum to make sure all our teachers have these key gatekeeper skills by the time they start full-time in classrooms each September.
- Other topics currently covered at Summer Institute, such as theories of child development and awareness of current issues within their subject/phase, remain crucial and will be re-scheduled and taught to participants throughout the rest of their training.
- While some elements of classroom management are generic for all teachers, lesson planning and assessment is often knowledge-dependent and techniques are subject- and phase-specific. Therefore, participants will now learn about these approaches within their subject and phase areas.

Assessment and planning skills will be taught within the framework of 'vision development' to emphasise how these skills enable and underpin the vision- and goal-setting process.

- We will replace the artificial split between vision setting and teaching skills by connecting the importance of vision to the daily act of assessment and planning right from the outset.
- We will prioritise building the mindset of 'teacher as evaluator', reflecting on their practice and developing their technical assessment skills, so teachers can accurately identify what helps their pupils learn and understand and address elements of pupil struggle.
- We will also clearly demonstrate to participants how assessment enables and underpins the vision- and goal-setting process by showing them what their pupils' strengths are and what they still need in order to achieve their full potential.

The training provided at Summer Institute will provide extensive opportunities for participants to practise what they are taught and to receive feedback on their performance.

- Summer Institute will provide many more opportunities for participants to actually *practise* methods in classroom management, planning and assessment and understanding what approaches work for them. It will do this through placing greater emphasis on producing plans for schemes of work and role-play of specific situations.
- This does not mean participants will not be taught theory; indeed it is essential for participants to understand the role and importance of memory and cognition in planning work and managing classrooms. However, the theory and role-play elements will be much more closely integrated.

Training will be provided in settings that get participants as close to real classrooms and the communities in which they will teach as possible.

- The research we have conducted emphasises how valuable it is for a teacher's training to understand how children will 'act back' to their instruction, and that a controlled setting that is similar to the classroom they will find themselves in come September is the ideal training environment setting for them to experience this. Under our new model, participants will spend two full weeks at Summer Institute in schools, observing and team teaching with experienced teachers.

- They will have the opportunity to try out the practice, theory and techniques they have learnt in a live, but controlled space. These sessions will be observed and supported by university, school and Teach First experts to continuously improve teaching.

Teaching support during the programme

We have created a more comprehensive yet simpler support structure around participants, placing just one credible and expert figure at the centre of each participant's experience.

- Teach First is creating a new role, a Participant Development Lead, which will function as the central figure for each participant's time on our programme. They will have overall responsibility for participant training and retention, and will organise and coordinate all the support a participant receives.
- This new role will be able to identify the needs of a participant and draw on their expertise and that of the school mentor and university tutor in order to flex the support a participant receives in response to their needs.
- They will have a high level of expertise and experience, both of teaching and in developing teachers, and will deliver an average of 18 observations and group sessions to each participant over the two years. These observations and group sessions are weighted to ensure participants have access to increased support early in their career, and will focus on embedding the gatekeeper skills early in the programme, before gradually shifting as participants progress as teachers, to adopt a coaching style.

University tutor and in-school support roles will have increased focus on subject specific and research support.

- The clear finding from our research is that participants value support from university tutors. Participants do, however, sometimes find it confusing having up to five support roles (professional mentor and tutor, subject mentor and tutor and Leadership Development Officer) across three organisations. So we are simplifying the support structure around a participant so they are assigned a single expert in-school mentor and a single expert university tutor.
- These support roles will be subject-specific as our research indicates the importance of subject-specific training. We know that universities are the institutions best equipped to provide our participants with this expertise.
- The new model will also empower university tutors to bring their expertise to bear at the most appropriate point in a teacher's development, helping participants really understand teaching in their subject area and develop into teachers who reflect thoughtfully on their practice and how they can help children learn.

Conclusion

Individuals who are currently being recruited for our 2017 intake will be the first trainees on our new Leadership Development Programme.

Teach First will carefully monitor and evaluate the new approach and, in the long-term, our ongoing curriculum design will be informed by feedback on what elements of the new model are proving to be the most effective.

We are confident that our new Leadership Development Programme represents the very best thinking from across our network.

We believe our new scheme will help to attract more people to the profession, develop an even higher quality of teachers and leaders, provide improved support to schools in low-income communities, and – most importantly – help our participants to have an even greater impact on the lives of young people.

teachfirst.org.uk

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