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# Department of Education

# Minutes of PGCE English Mentors’ Meeting

# Thursday 20th October 2022

**Present in person:** Catherine Shawyer, PGCE Curriculum Area Lead for English; Naomi Welsh, All Saints School; Jenny Kilmartin, All Saints School; Izzy Terry, Huntington School; Emily Vizard, The Joseph Rowntree School

**Present via Zoom:** Matt Gadd, George Pindar School; Ed Kisby, Selby High School: Ruth Johnson, St. John Fisher School

**Apologies:** Nicola Towle, Associate PGCE English Tutor; Holly Winter, Garforth Academy; Lee Carter, Fulford School; Louise Cole, Fulford School; Rachel Fieldhouse, Outwood Academy Freeston; Anna Cantrell, Tadcaster Grammar School; Lucy Waines, Archbishop Holgate’s School; Kate Cockle, Archbishop Holgate’s School; Joe Row, The Marvell College

N.B. The slides to accompany these Minutes can be found at [this link](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14jH2sQPE-LyptrBOmt5iPrJnnc7ls-NMMNIsAIrjBAA/edit#slide=id.p1) .

### Welcome, apologies & introductions

CSh welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited colleagues to introduce themselves.

### This Year’s English Cohort

CSh gave a brief overview of this year’s PGCE English cohort (see Slide 2) and emphasised how, for a second consecutive year, English trainees were not in receipt of a DfE training bursary, meaning finances are very tight and a source of anxiety for many trainees. Some are having to try and work alongside doing the PGCE course and this might lead to tiredness and lack lustre PGCE performances, especially if trainees are working long and late hours in bars and restaurants.She asked mentors to continue to be aware of the additional problems this may pose for trainees. There is a small PGCE hardship fund available at the University should mentors feel that their trainee(s) might need particular financial support. Mentors should let CSh or NT know if they become aware that a trainee might benefit from some additional support financially.

CSh passed on sincere thanks to mentors for their ongoing support of the University of York ITT Partnership and indeed their commitment to the future health of the teaching profession, especially at a time of a deepening recruitment and retention crisis.

### Placement 1 Blocks 1 & 2

Using slides 3-5 CSh went over expectations of trainees and the University of York ITT course requirements for both blocks of Placement 1. Some particularly key points included:

* That trainees should be expected to behave like and be treated as members of the teaching staff in all professional matters, but as they are learning about professional conduct there may be some mistakes made. Just as mentors can support trainees’ classroom development, so can they influence trainees’ understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher by teaching this and being explicit about what professionalism means in practice.
* Especially in the early part of Placement 1 (i.e. Block 1 before Christmas) trainees should be encouraged to use as much of the Department’s existing schemes of work ad resources as possible to allow them the opportunity to focus on classroom management and lesson delivery.
* Teaching in Block 1 should be spread over the full six weeks rather than bunched towards the end of Block 1.
* An opportunity to teach A’ Level means just 1 or 2 lessons in total. We understand that trainees cannot be given substantial amounts of post 16 teaching and trainees have been advised of this.
* Trainees should be encouraged to continue to observe expert colleagues throughout Placement 1 with observations focusing increasingly on specific areas of their own practice that they need to refine. Observation is not something they move on from; it is an integral and ongoing part of their training entitlement.
* Trainees should come to mentor meetings well prepared to ensure that the hour of mentoring time is used as effectively as possible. Parts (e.g. the “Your Progress” and “Pupil Progress” boxes) of their [weekly discussion record](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Cg-DcEiMM8qUcHtfkaSwwHEqP8gnq7fxOBgr1zvm12A/edit) should have been completed by the trainee before the commencement of the meeting.
* Part of each mentor meeting (i.e. about 20 minutes) should be spent on professional discussions of aspects of English pedagogy. Copies of Barbara’ Bleiman’s book *What Matters in English Teaching* have been purchased from last year’s PGCE English course budget and will be made available via trainees to mentors to support these pedagogical discussions. Some of the discussions could be linked to some of the issues which appear on Slide 13 and/or some of the key takeaways from university sessions.
* We have two lesson observation feedback forms now. The [weekly lesson observation form](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V23xEtc-EMpTiBXRD-CBtcJxYpClv7RKoNZ1mj4ii3Q/edit) links feedback explicitly to the CCF and one of these must be completed for the trainee each week by a host teacher/the mentor whereas the [“lighter touch” version](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AEbVsJ-LnI-HWi9mF0fifWvoBZfvtC_FA6ADuXSHto0/edit) can be used by staff on an ongoing basis with only the trainee having to make links to the CCF.

### How can mentors build on trainees’ early learning?

Using Slide 6 CSh talked mentors through how they might link trainees’ classroom practice in Block 1 to University training inputs from the first phase of the course. When an ITT course is inspected by Ofsted, one of the things inspectors wish to see, which of course is good practice anyway, is a training curriculum which links university and school experiences in a consistent and meaningful way. The ideas on slide 6 aim to help mentors to do just that.

### How can mentors support trainees’ new learning?

Using slides 7-12 CSh suggested various ways mentors could encourage trainees to engage in new learning around the next training phase and relevant sections of the CCF (2, 3 & 6). She also showed how meaningful links to the University training curriculum could be made in school and signposted helpful resources such as the [WSI (Whole School issues) Handbook](https://www.york.ac.uk/media/educationalstudies/pgce/documents/mentorpack/PGCE%20WSI%20Handbook%202022-23.pdf).

### Issues in English Teaching

Using slides 13 and 14 CSh initiated a discussion around some of the current issues and concerns in English teaching and invited colleagues to share perspectives and experiences. Some discussion occurred around the place of encouraging pupils to make personal responses to texts; the place and value of small group work in English; the place of contextual knowledge when teaching literary texts and how possible active classroom approaches to Shakespeare actually was.

She also reminded colleagues about a recent Ofsted report on English teaching and links to various response to this report from NATE, The English and Media Centre and the English Association as well as offering a document she had created herself as an initial reaction upon reading the report. All links to these materials appear in the slides.

Additionally, CSh reminded colleagues of the project last year’s PGCE English trainees had taken part in to help diversify texts taught in English classrooms. A link to the video trainees had made for English Departments in our ITT Partnership appears on slide 14.

CSh invited colleagues to share issues from their schools and Departments. EV mentioned that a visit of a writer was occurring in the not too distant future at The Joseph Rowntree School. EK mentioned the increasingly significant numbers of students with EAL who are joining Selby High School and said he was always looking for useful tips, strategies and resources to support these pupils.

### A.O.B.

Slide 15 gives details of the termly English mentor meetings which will hopefully enable mentors to give their schools sufficient notice to arrange for them to be covered in order to attend the meetings.

Slide 15 also has links to a couple of online courses CSh thought mentors and their English Departments might be interested in.

Finally, CSh drew mentors’ attention to a recently created, freely accessible page on the NATE website where interesting articles linked to English pedagogy and subject knolwdege were being collated.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.

Minutes: Catherine Shawyer