The Maths and Science Multiple Placement Project: Years 1 and 2

Background and history of the project

The multiple placement project is organised and supported by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) provider link advisers (PLAs). The aim of the project is to support initial teacher training (ITT) providers to recruit to target in maths and science by improving the supply and quality of school placements through the use of multiple placements.

ITT providers involved in the project are identified and supported by the PLAs and asked to:

- place two or more trainees together in their final assessed school placement (ensuring a minimum of six multiple placements in maths and science per year)
- develop new ways of working with schools, maths and science ITT staff and trainees in order to support trainees participating in the multiple placement, and
- gather evidence from trainees, schools and mentors about the ways in which multiple placements enhance the training experience.

Providers are chosen by the PLAs either because a lack of school placements is restricting recruitment in maths and science, or because of significant recruitment shortfalls in these subjects.

The project began in the 2007 spring term, entered a second year in spring 2008, and a third year in autumn 2008. This report covers the first and second years of the project.

During the first year of the project 19 providers took part, which enabled 80 schools and 200 trainees to be involved. During the second year, 28 providers were involved (some of whom were involved in the first year and decided to continue through to a second year to embed the practice). During this second year, 164 schools and 360 trainees were involved.

At the end of each year, providers were asked to evaluate the project against their individual objectives, drawing on evidence from school staff, trainees, higher education institution (HEI) staff and, in some cases, pupils. There are a number of case-studies available to share good practice and highlight the benefits of multiple placements. You will find these on the TDA web pages.

The project is now entering a third year with 12 providers participating.

You can find a list of all the ITT providers who have taken part in this project at the end of this report.

Aims of the project

The overall aim of the project is to reduce barriers to recruitment to maths and science through the creative use of trainee placements as well as improve the quality of the trainee placement experience.

It also enables ITT providers to:

- create opportunities for collaborative professional learning for trainees
- develop coaching and mentoring skills for trainees and mentors
- develop ITT provider partnership expertise, and
- gather evidence to encourage the future use of multiple placements with partnership schools.

Key findings from Years 1 and 2

Overall, the multiple placement project has been successful. ITT providers have reported that the use of multiple placements has eased the pressure of finding placements and, more importantly, increased the quality of a trainee's placement experience. As a result of the placement barrier being lifted, providers were more confident that they could recruit to target in maths and science.

Providers who participated in the first and second year of the project are now advanced in embedding multiple placement practices in a sustainable way, developing robust models for multiple placement, based on the evidence gathered from the project.

The key findings outlined below have been drawn from the evaluation reports submitted by the providers at the end of years 1 and 2. They have been broken down into benefits for providers, trainees, pupils, schools, mentors and tutors.

ITT providers

ITT providers found that taking part in the project:

- assisted in full recruitment to maths and science by removing or reducing the barrier of a lack of suitable school places
- improved the quality of the placement experience for trainees, mentors and pupils
- provided good opportunities to explore ways of increasing the number and quality of multiple placements in order to support full recruitment to maths and science, and
- provided an opportunity to re-examine practice with partnership schools in the light of changing demands in schools and ITT.

The positive outcomes that were reported led the overwhelming majority of providers to express a strong commitment to continue with the multiple placement approach and other related work with their partnership schools.

Trainees

The emphasis on collaboration in training underpinned trainee progress to qualified teacher status (QTS) through deepening their learning.

The trainees achieved this learning by:

- taking on bigger challenges. For example, more demanding practical work (in science), challenging classes (including some in schools facing challenging circumstances), teaching groups where higher order subject knowledge was

required (A-level drop-in classes), and supporting innovative curriculum implementation (the use of technology)

- providing higher quality teaching through mutual support with lesson preparation and planning, evaluation and the required underpinning subject knowledge

- gaining deeper insights into learning (self and pupil) and professional development

- increasing their understanding of the roles of colleagues within the wider school workforce. For example, through taking on the role of teaching assistant (TA) or planning a TA's work within a lesson they were leading

- appreciating the role that personal and emotional support plays in professional development particularly during a placement, particularly at the beginning, and

- adopting and developing skills in peer mentoring through providing more opportunities for structured lesson observation and focused feedback.

Pupils

The experience of being taught by several trainees working collaboratively directly benefited pupils' learning experience.

Multiple placements created improved learning opportunities for pupils through:

- trainees planning and delivering higher quality lessons

- providing improved targeted support to pupils in lessons and group work (including special arrangements made possible through additional resource created by multiple-placements)

- improving the match between pupils' personal needs and the range of teaching and learning experiences available, and

- trainees demonstrating improved behaviour management with 'harder to teach' classes (including some in schools facing challenging circumstances).

Schools

Multiple placements provided schools with greater flexibility to respond to pupils' individual needs through maximising timetabling opportunities.

Multiple placements enabled schools to:

- reduce the number of classes that needed to be scheduled compared to two separate placements (ie, reduce potential disruption through trainees 'sharing' classes and groups)

- enable a wider range of classes to be taught, including more challenging and higher achieving groups (which may have previously been deemed too demanding for trainees working on their own)

- support department developments such as A-level drop-in sessions, 'gifted and talented' or under-achieving pupils' target groups, or cross-curricular innovation

- provide opportunities to deepen partnerships with HEI through joint ITT and continuing professional development advances (including the development of departmental teaching and learning practices), and

- increase opportunities for NQT recruitment to the school.

Mentors

Mentors are at the heart of the success of multiple placements for the trainees, but taking part in the project also provides mentors with opportunities to further develop their own effectiveness.

Multiple placements gave mentors opportunities to:

- be professionally challenged, enthused and developed by working with several trainees

- engage in developmental activities to explore the new QTS standards and the ways that these can be developed in multiple placements

- to reflect on their work in teaching teams and the roles of different colleagues within these (for example, teaching assistants, coaches), and

- model good training practices, for example, by coaching and giving feedback to one whilst being observed by another trainee who then gave feedback to the mentor.

HEI tutors

Multiple placements strengthened the working partnership between tutors and schools.

The quality of training was enhanced by:

- increasing the time spent by tutors on supporting trainees and working with mentors through reducing tutors' travel time

- providing more opportunities to coach and support mentors in developing their work with multiple placements

- increasing the opportunities for wider-based professional collaboration and reflection on the changing role of the tutor through working with trainees and their mentor (for example, joint observations, introducing a curriculum development)

- maximising the use of, and support for, good quality priority subject placements

- encouraging tutors to develop new ways of supporting mentors and their placements, for example, though mentor coaching, and

- stimulating innovative practice, for example, through a joint review of the trainees' video-capture lessons by the trainees themselves, as well as with their mentors and tutors. This activity supported the evidencing of trainees' progress against the standards and the fine-tuning of target setting.

Guidance on setting up and embedding the use of multiple placements

Evidence and feedback from ITT provider evaluation reports have been used to identify factors in to successful multiple placements. The following section is intended to act as a guide for ITT providers intending to use multiple placements with their partnership schools, and for ITT providers who have begun to use multiple placements and are now seeking to embed the practice in their work.

Multiple placement projects are more likely to be successful where:

- school departments are identified as early as possible and are involved in the planning, preparation, implementation and evaluation of paired placements

- there is clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of school-based tutors, trainees and HEI tutors on paired placements, and how these might develop during the course of the initial teacher education programme

- the roles and responsibilities of school-based tutors and HEI tutors are developed to take account of the new expectations, and these are reflected in teacher-mentor training and guidance for university tutors

- time is allowed in the programme to prepare trainees and mentors for paired placement, and also to implement shared placement arrangements (eg, joint teaching and mentor sessions)

- a range of working models for pairs that suit subject, student, school and HEI needs and expectations are developed and offered to mentors and trainees

- the higher level mentoring and coaching skills needed for successful multiple placements are recognised and developed through appropriate support, including training

- partnerships recognise that mismatched pairs are inevitable, can be managed successfully, and provide valuable professional experience and learning in managing under-performing colleagues

- pupils understand what is expected of them in each lesson and what roles trainees and mentors are adopting

- time is allowed in university and school for trainees to work together and develop team working skills required by paired placements, including peer observation and providing feedback

- a protocol for what to do when a pair, despite remedial action, does not work is agreed and understood, and

- partnership mentors, HEI tutors and trainees are kept aware of multiple placement developments and staff are proactive about disseminating emerging practices, especially through participants.

The provider link advisers encouraged ITT providers participating in the project to begin strategic planning to build multiple placements into their usual practice. The characteristics of strategic developments include:

- evidence-based development, which involves all partners in gathering, reviewing and making use of evidence to inform their placement and ITE practices

- active, ongoing communication which convinces existing partners to continue and new partner schools to participate in multiple placements

- multiple placements being part of a wider strategy to widen and deepen partnership through, for example, modelling collaborative practices

- multiple placements being integrated in larger strategic developments, for example, new professionalism, new standards for trainees and mentors and the masters in teaching and learning, and

- making use of multiple placements to build the provider's capacity to manage change within the partnership.

Further information and case-studies

You can find case-studies on successful multiple placements on the TDA website at www.tda.gov.uk. For further information or guidance on setting up multiple placements, contact your provider link adviser.

Annex

ITT providers involved in the multiple placement project

Phase 1

Bradford College
Durham University
Keele University
Liverpool Hope University
Nottingham Trent University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Oxford Brookes University
St Mary's University College
The University of Bristol
The University of East London

The University of Leeds
The University of Leicester
The University of Southampton
The University of Sussex
The University of the West of England
The University of Sunderland
The University of Warwick
The University of York
University College of St Mark and St
John Plymouth

Phase 2

Bishop Grosseteste University College
Bradford College
Durham University
Edge Hill University
Keele University
Liverpool Hope University
London Metropolitan University
London Southbank University
Newcastle University
Newman University College
Nottingham Trent University
Oxford Brookes University
Sheffield Hallam University
The University of Bedfordshire
The University of Bath
The University of Chester
The University of Cumbria
The University of East London
The University of Greenwich
The University of Leicester
The University of Portsmouth
The University of Southampton
The University of Sussex
The University of Sunderland
The University of Warwick
The University of the West of England
The University of York
University College of St Mark and St
John Plymouth

Phase 3 (as of November 2008)
Bath Spa University
London Metropolitan University
Newman University College
Roehampton University
The University of Bath
The University of Bedfordshire
The University of Brighton
The University of Greenwich
The University of Hull
The University of Leeds
The University of Plymouth

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