



Department
for Education

School Experience Programme

Information for schools

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Introduction

This information note aims to support schools in the delivery of the School Experience Programme (SEP).

School experience is vital to candidates looking to enter initial teacher training (ITT), as many ITT providers, School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers (SCITTs) and School Direct lead schools now ask for a minimum amount of experience of working with young people prior to application. Candidates are expected to show that they have a good understanding of the role of a teacher, give examples of creative and innovative teaching styles they have observed and discuss how they may tailor lessons to cater for students with different abilities and backgrounds. They are also often tested on their knowledge of the national curriculum for their subject, and general teaching pedagogy. A good quality school experience prior to application can help them evidence this.

For schools involved in School Direct, having candidates into the school on school experience visits is also a fantastic opportunity to meet potential applicants, and we know that 80% of School Direct schools that have been involved in the School Experience Programme to date use it to assist with their recruitment

“Many thanks...for... introducing us to the School Experience Programme back in February. We’ve now had several potential trainee teachers (applicants for 2014 and potentially 2015) observe lessons here at Broughton through the SEP programme. We invite the potential trainee teachers to observe lessons on days that suit our school and departments, they gain valuable observation days that they require for their UCAS application, we promote the Preston Teaching School Alliance and we get PAID too! We hope to utilise the scheme more next year, as it is a win win situation”.

(Sandra Duggan, Broughton Business and Enterprise College, Preston)

Background and history

The School Experience Programme has been in operation from September 2011 and was developed in order to provide central access to school experience for candidates in priority subject areas who were wishing to apply for ITT so that they could make a strong application to ITT that evidenced work with children and young people in a school environment.

The introduction of the School Experience Programme portal in September 2012 has allowed this scheme to be managed and administered through a central database, which has vastly improved the efficiency and usability of the programme for schools. In the 2013/14 academic year alone, there were 728 schools signed up to the programme and it catered for over 4000 candidates and over 10,000 placement days.

The overwhelming success of the programme has allowed for further developments, and as of September 2014, the School Experience Programme portal will also allow schools to offer placement days in non priority subjects (although these will not attract funding from the Department for Education,) alongside the traditionally funded programme.

Programme protocols and processes

In the move to a school-led system, it is important that schools have as much autonomy as possible to design and deliver the experience that is offered to candidates. However, as a national offer with attached funding, there are a few protocols that we expect participating schools to align themselves with:

Eligibility

Registration for both the funded and non-funded School Experience Programme (SEP) is open to all of the below, on the condition that they are not in special measures:

- All mainstream secondary schools
- Maintained secondary special schools
- Secondary Academies
- Sixth Form Colleges
- Secondary Pupil Referral Units
- Secondary Free Schools

Please note that many providers expect candidates to evidence experience across two key stages. If your school cannot offer this, it should be made clear in your placement notes and candidates should be advised to check with their chosen provider prior to booking a place with you.

From 1st September 2014 onwards, and on a rolling basis, any schools that do not offer placements within a 6 month period will be marked on the system as 'Dormant' (so the first time this will occur is 1st March 2015) . 'Dormant' schools will need to contact the SEP team to re-activate their registration if they then wish to begin to offer placement dates.

Access

Funded programme

From September 2014, the Department for Education will be talking to all eligible candidates prior to allowing them access to the funded School Experience Programme to pre-screen them and check suitability. This means that all candidates accessing the funded programme will have, as a minimum, stated to us that they:

- intend to apply for initial teacher training this year (for 2015/2016 entry)
- have Maths and English GCSE at Grade C or above (or equivalent)
- have, or are expected to have, a minimum of a 2:2 in a degree which is relevant to the subject they wish to teach, or sufficient A level qualifications to enable them to progress with their application with some subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) support if appropriate (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subject-knowledge-enhancement-guide>)
- have had less than 10 days school experience in an English state school in the past 12 months

For the academic year 2015, the priority subjects that will be included in the school experience programme are:

Chemistry

Computing

Maths

Modern Languages

Physics

Please note that as government priorities change, priority subjects may change. Schools will be informed with plenty of prior notice of any amendments.

Non-funded programme

The non-funded programme will be open to candidates in priority subjects that have not met all of the above eligibility criteria, including those who are not intending to apply for ITT until the following year (eg second year undergraduate students) and so this is an ideal opportunity to meet potential candidates for future years and 'keep them warm' for application to your school or partnership.

The non-funded programme will also be accessible to candidates in the following subjects, who have an intention to apply to ITT within the current academic year:

Art and Design

Biology

Business Studies

Classics

Design and Technology

English

Geography

History

Music

Physical education

Religious education

Social studies

General*

*(this category can be used if you offer a programme which is not subject specific but provides experience across your school, or in subjects not listed above, which will need to be specified in your placement notes)

We are not providing access to the portal for primary candidates at this stage, but are looking to develop this in the near future.

Programme structure

The School Experience Programme Portal will facilitate the matching of schools and candidates for the first day of their placement within a school.

Funded programme

- Following the 1 day initial placement, schools will be expected to discuss individual requirements with each candidate and to offer additional days to these candidates up to a maximum of 10 days.
- When the additional days take place is for negotiation and discussion between the school and candidate.
- There is no requirement as to how schools structure placement dates – you may wish to run block placements or a more flexible system.
- It will be up to your school to decide how many candidates it can offer a positive placement experience to and you may wish to offer placement to more than one candidate at a time. (Schools and candidates have fed back that multiple placements provide peer benefits and we would welcome schools offering multiple placements).
- If there is a restriction on the number of additional days your school will be able to offer on any placement, you should state this up front in your public placement notes in order to set an appropriate expectation for the candidate.
- If after your first day with a candidate you are unable to offer further days through unforeseen circumstances, or you feel it is not appropriate to do so, you should inform the participant. You should also contact the SEP team on the Teaching Line number – 0800 085 0962, giving details of why your school is unable or unwilling to offer additional days.

Non-funded programme

- It will be at the school's discretion as to how many days are offered to candidates – the portal will allow for a matching on the initial day only and then further days are for the school and candidate to negotiate.
- If you do offer a structured programme with a set number of days, or particular dates, this should be referenced in the public placement notes section so that a candidate knows in advance what they are signing up to.

Cancellation policy

We do understand that although placements are offered in good faith, there are occasionally unforeseen circumstances that arise that mean a school needs to cancel a particular booking.

We would ask that you give the SEP team as much notice as is feasibly possible if you do need to cancel a particular day – they will need to re-arrange a placement for that candidate, who may be relying on gaining their school experience in the immediate future in order to evidence it in their ITT application. They may have booked time off work or organised childcare to accommodate their placement days.

We continuously monitor cancellations and therefore will speak to any school that produces high numbers of cancellations to discuss their capacity to deliver the programme at that time.

We work hard to ensure that cancellations from candidates are few and far between, but we do understand that this happens from time to time, and our cancellation policy below seeks to compensate for this..

For the funded programme, cancellations are recompensed according to the table below:

Cancellation	Payment due
Participant cancels 3 or more days in advance of the placement taking place	No payment due to school
Participant cancels 2 or less days in advance of the placement taking place	Day 1 placement payment due to school
Placement cancelled by school	No payment due to the school
Participant does not turn up for 1 day placement and does not inform the school or Teaching Line	1 day placement payment due to school
Participant does not turn up for their additional placement days and does not inform the school or Teaching Line	1 day payment due to the school

Funding

In order to simplify the funding structure of the programme and ensure schools are not penalised for offering more days, the funding structure from September 2014 will be as follows:

- Schools will be funded per day for every candidate that they host on the School Experience Programme in priority subjects (see page 10) at a rate of £35 per day, up to a maximum of 10 days.
- Schools will also be able to claim for a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check for each candidate that undertakes more than 1 day in their school if this is required at a flat rate of £50.
- We allow candidates to be eligible for the funded programme for up to 10 days experience. If they have not reached this quota in their original school but it is felt they would benefit from further days, we will allow them to go into another school. However, if they have already attracted funding for a DBS check through our system, we will require them to sign up to the DBS Update Service (for more information see link www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service) at a cost to themselves of £13 and therefore they will not be eligible for further DBS funding through the Department for Education.
- Please note that schools should look to process DBS payment promptly once the check has been processed, as only one claim per candidate will be allowed and any delay in processing this may result in the funding being given to a follow up school placement.
- As this programme is supported by the Department for Education, candidates should not be charged any additional monies for their attendance.
- Any school that hosts 20 initial days or more on the School Experience Programme within a calendar month will be eligible to claim a £500 block booking bonus.
- You will only receive an invoice for payment once the placement has been completed and feedback received.

For the non-funded programme, schools will not receive any payments from the Department for Education, but it is at a school's discretion if they wish to levy a charge for attendance to a candidate. This must be stated upfront in the public notes section of the portal.

Public facing notes

On the School Experience Programme portal for both funded and non-funded programmes, schools are able to enter notes at both school and placement level.

School notes should contain information on things such as:

- school status (e.g. are you an Academy, Voluntary Aided, etc)
- any engagement with Initial Teacher Training that you have (e.g. are you a School Direct lead or partner school or do you offer placements for Mainstream initial teacher training programme.
- links to latest Ofsted reports and your school website or any other information you would like candidates to read about your school as a whole

Placement notes should include:

- what time candidates should turn up for their placement day and where and to whom they should report
- what candidates need to bring with them (eg proof of identification, necessary paperwork for DBS check)
- if there are any limitations in terms of the number of further days on offer
- if you only offer experience within 1 Key Stage and therefore candidates need to check with their chosen provider on suitability prior to booking
- for the non-funded programme, if there is any charge for the programme and how this should be paid
- any detail on school experience placements that are recorded as 'General' in the system

Please note that a link to the placement notes that you write will be included in the candidate's booking confirmation email, and the more comprehensive these are, the less likely it is that a candidate will need to phone the school in advance of the placement to check on logistics.

Thank you for your interest in the School Experience Programme, and we wish you every success in your delivery. For more information on how to access and work the School Experience Portal and claim payments for the funded programme, please contact the School Experience Programme team on 0800 085 0962 or email schoolexperience@ta-recruit.education.gov.uk.

Good practice

Through our evaluation and review processes around the School Experience Programme over the past number of years, we have gathered invaluable feedback from candidates and schools on what makes for a successful school experience from both perspectives.

Here are some key points that have arisen from feedback from candidates who have attended SEP as to what makes for a beneficial experience that they can evidence on application for an ITT place to help any schools that wish to begin to, or further develop, their offer:

- Arrange opportunities for discussion with teachers so that the candidate can ask questions.
- Make sure the day has structure and is planned and organised in advance.
- Ensure the host teachers are fully aware of the visit and are prepared, and are on board with hosting SEP placements to ensure the experience is positive for the candidate.
- Remember that the candidate is interviewing the school too, which is particularly important for School Direct schools.
- Try and allow the candidate to observe a variety of lessons, age ranges and ability groups.
- Give the candidate the opportunity to interact with students and participate in lessons where appropriate.
- Be prepared to confirm in writing that the candidate has undertaken school experience at your school.
- If possible, allow the candidate to be exposed to other areas of teaching outside the classroom (e.g. lesson planning, departmental meetings, etc)

We also get regular feedback from schools on their programmes, and here are some extracts from case studies highlighting schools that work extensively with School Experience programme and the benefits that it brings to them:

Ryan Galletly, Subject Leader of Physics, has been leading the School Experience Programme at Richard Challoner School in Surrey since 2012. Here he offers his thoughts and insights into the benefits and challenges of running the programme.

What appealed to you in getting involved with the School Experience Programme?

With the introduction of School Direct, I knew that our school would become responsible for appointing trainee teachers and shaping their training to suit our needs. The School Experience Programme is an invaluable way of seeing potential candidates in action and for us to be able to potentially 'cherry-pick' the right people.

As an experienced member of staff, I also feel strongly that we have a moral obligation to give something back to the profession. It can be very difficult to get initial experience within a school and cold-calling doesn't always work. Had it not been for the good will of the schools that hosted myself and my colleagues when we were first starting out then we would not have become teachers, so it only seems right that we continue that good will. This is an ideal way to create new opportunities for people wishing to explore teaching as a career.

Being involved in the School Experience Programme has also generated some additional income for the school, which has allowed us to purchase class sets of iPads, laptops, new textbooks, novels, and some sophisticated equipment for the science and maths departments.

How have you found the School Experience booking process (including using the Portal) and the support you have received from the School Experience team at NCTL?

The School Experience Programme has been a fantastic new initiative to get involved in. I have loved the opportunity to meet new individuals who are interested in the teaching profession. It is really interesting to meet people from all walks of life who have wonderful life stories to tell about how they have come to the conclusion that teaching is for them.

The portal is unbelievably easy to follow, and as long as you have a spreadsheet to keep track of all the visits then you will find it stress free. However, should you run into

any problems then the School experience team are only a phone call away and their help is invaluable.

What does a typical School Experience at your school consist of for participants?

A typical day at our school consists of participants arriving by 8:30am and signing into the office. Their documents are checked and they are given a lanyard with a specific colour so staff know who they are. They are then asked to stay in the staffroom while they are handed timetables and meet their Heads of Department. Official lessons start at 9:15, but we ask them to come earlier as this gives them time to meet the department staff and other people on the course.

The participants will observe lessons and also have free time in order to complete tasks that will help them in the interview process. Here is a list of some of the tasks that they are asked to complete when they are not observing lessons:

Task 1 - Write me an essay about why your subject should be taught in the national curriculum.

Task 2 - Research what is the difference between setting, streaming and mixed ability.

Task 3 - A group task called the Zin Obelisk to assess ability to work in a group.

Task 4 - Personal statement template guidance.

Task 5 - Prepare answers to common teacher interview questions.

Task 6 - Participants will be asked to hit the books and work through some A-level books.

Task 7 - Given a template they will have to plan a lesson on their chosen topic.

Task 8 - Prepare answers to scenarios that are real life situations that a teacher may encounter in the classroom.

Task 9 - Write me an essay on what are the characteristics of an outstanding teacher

Task 10 - Research the curriculum and how it is changing

I believe that observation on its own is not enough to fully prepare candidates for interview, so I set up these tasks to further develop their understanding of the job that we do and to expose them to some of the daily challenges and decisions that we have to make.

Further to this experience, we have set up three individual time slots per week for the participants to have professional studies lectures by a very experienced member of senior leadership who is in charge of Teaching and Learning. From my experience this has always been the part of the experience that participants find the most enjoyable and

useful. This is a time for them to fully engage in discussion about pedagogy and teaching strategies.

At the end of the teaching day, I like to have a quick chat with the participants about how the day was and if they have any advice for me on how to run the programme better. It is sessions like this that has shaped the programme that we run today.

What are the benefits to your school in engaging with the School Experience Programme?

We are able to meet potential candidates and discuss with them their aspirations and career plans. This allows us to offer placements to candidates who we feel will complement the ethos of Richard Challoner and identify well with our students.

Another benefit is that the vast majority of candidates are extremely helpful, eager and keen to participate in the classroom. They make an invaluable contribution and provide additional support to students within the classroom.

Would you recommend the programme to other schools?

Yes and I have done! I feel that the School Experience Programme offers a win-win situation for schools. Staff take extra care with their lesson planning and gain confidence about having visitors and observers in their classrooms. Students benefit from well-prepared lessons and we gain an additional, enthusiastic adult within the school for the duration of the placement.

If we want to attract the right sort of people to become teachers, then schools need to take advantage of this type of programme. Offering the School Experience Programme provides potential trainees with an opportunity to see if teaching is for them, but equally, it allows schools to see if trainees are right for them.

Caroline Carroll, Teaching School Administrator, has been co-ordinating the School Experience Programme at Millais School in Horsham since 2012. Here she shares her experience and considers the benefits of running the programme.

What appealed to you in getting involved with the School Experience Programme?

We already had an established practice of hosting school observations, more so since the higher education institutes started to make it a pre-PGCE requirement. We welcomed the opportunity to run these observations on a more formal basis, and to gain small amounts of revenue for the departments hosting the visitors.

How have you found the School Experience booking process (including using the Portal) and the support you have received from the School Experience team at NCTL?

The portal was a huge improvement in terms of invoicing, dates etc and the support from SEP has always been exemplary and constant.

What does a typical School Experience at your school consist of for participants?

Visitors are picked up from reception and taken to the relevant curriculum area. They are sent a timetable and a booklet before their visit. The booklet gives them various exercises to enable them to focus their observations and gain a greater understanding of the teaching methods they are watching. They observe six lessons and sit with their subject area at lunch so they can chat and ask questions.

What are the benefits to your school in engaging with the School Experience Programme?

Teaching staff, especially in Mathematics where they have hosted a lot of visitors, say they have become so accustomed to having observers in the classroom that it has become second nature. This has had a positive effect in terms of confidence levels for other observations by the senior leadership team and OFSTED, as and when they arise.

Staff have also mentioned that speaking to visitors about their motivations for entering the teaching profession has reminded them of their own original enthusiasms and reasons.

Increasingly, we are finding that the link between the School Experience Programme and School Direct is strengthening as School Direct grows. It has provided us with an opportunity to see the potential of possible applicants in a classroom situation, and to determine whether they would be suitable for School Direct. In addition, we have contacted other local schools for feedback if they have hosted an applicant on SEP.

Finally, some visitors have gained initial teacher training places following their extended visits and I think staff are pleased to have played a part in that successful journey.

Would you recommend the programme to other schools?

Yes. We have encouraged all of the schools in our Teaching School Alliance to register by advertising this in our monthly newsletter. We have highlighted the positives at every opportunity.

Contact us

If at any stage of your engagement with the School Experience Programme you would be interested in showcasing the work of your school through a case study please contact the SEP team on 0800 085 0962 or email schoolexperience@ta-recruit.education.gov.uk and they will pass your details on to the relevant team within the Department for Education.

If you have a complaint relating to the School Experience Programme please contact: NCTL.SEP@education.gsi.gov.uk.



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