



## **Mentoring in ITT** **Waddington All Saints Case Study**

### **All Saints Primary School**

All Saints Primary School is located about 6 miles south of the city of Lincoln. It is a large primary school, taking children from the age of 4 to the age of 11. Children travel to the school from villages around the area and approximately 3/4 of our intake comes from RAF Waddington. We currently have 14 classes and approximately 400 pupils on roll.

Mentoring and coaching at All Saints is seen as a key feature within the school and is integral to the management structure. Within the school all teachers have experience of the mentoring process, either by mentoring or being mentored them-selves. The school believes that its teachers gain valuable learning experiences from others as well as imparting knowledge themselves. Through these processes Teachers and TAs have become more reflective practitioners, are receptive to new ideas and have developed their listening and questioning skills.

The school has a well established partnership with the HEI provider Bishop Grosseteste University College (BG) which led to the involvement within the Partnership Development Project funded by the TDA.

The ITT co-ordinator (head teacher) works closely with BGC and has many years experience of working with trainee teachers. The school has an appointed lead mentor who works closely with trainees and their tutors. At the time of induction trainees have access to the school's comprehensive prospectus, staff handbook, induction and ITT policy, which give clear expectations and are reviewed regularly to ensure the key information is there to empower individuals.

### **Mentoring at All Saints**

Mentoring and coaching is embedded within the ethos of the school. The processes can be found in both the formal and informal structures through the commitment placed upon continuing staff development and the enhancement of life long learning.

Within the school there is a culture of openness. Mentoring is used by staff to support each others development, share good practice and develop the core principles throughout the school, ensuring progression through whole school expectations.

Mentoring and coaching takes on various forms and is modelled at all levels, from the pupils' through to the governing body.

- One Key form of mentoring occurs through supporting the development of trainees and NQTs, a major commitment for the school. NQTs are mentored by experienced teachers, who have volunteered to take on such a role. Trainees are mentored by the class teacher, with the support of the lead mentor. SLT plays a key role throughout.
- New members of staff, or teachers who have changed their area of responsibility or role, are mentored by a member of staff with that relevant experience to aid the transition and ensure continuity.
- All staff know who to turn to, to help solve an issue. The way the school is structured within planning and learning development teams helps this process, providing various support networks for individuals. Areas of responsibility are broadly spread out but key people hold the bigger picture.
- All staff have the opportunity to go out and seek information to feed back into school practice, continuing their professional development.
- A detailed programme of INSET is in place to move thinking forward.

### **What does mentoring look like?**

Mentoring is driven by a specific focus, for example behaviour management or differentiation. This agenda is established by discussion with all relevant parties before a lesson observation. It is monitored against success criteria. Progress within the lesson observations is measured against the professional standards and informs subsequent planning.

This is followed by a formative discussion and further action planning. Formalised feedback is shared between all participants and next steps are identified.

Developing open professional dialogue, reflective practice and having a positive working relationship are essential elements of the mentoring process. Trainees structure their experiences using a range of proformas which help to support their developmental thinking.

### **Mentoring Trainees**

Each trainee is assigned a class and their teacher's role becomes that of mentor. This role then takes on a more formal process. Each week trainees have a specific focus to develop, based upon individual needs. This is then monitored and focused upon during the weekly observation. Feedback forms are completed with agreed targets formed together. All observations are linked to the professional standards and the focus is set and decided upon prior to the session. Weekly summary sheets are filled in by trainees to show the progression over the placement. Feedback is key to the development of a successful partnership between the trainee and mentor. Comments need to be balanced between positive and constructive to motivate the development of the both roles, promoting shared discussion and areas of good practise.

The mentoring process recognises the importance of motivation and self esteem. Mentors take on the role of being a critical friend; taking the time to listen and offering advice and help when needed.

### **What Skills and Attributes do Mentors and Mentees Need?**

CUREE have identified the following skills and attributes as key to the mentor role to which the school agrees.

- Empathy;
- Objectivity;
- Ability to build confidence and trust – to act as a critical friend;
- Ability to use questioning skills effectively in order to draw out longer and more detailed responses;
- Good communication skills;
- Willingness to be able to tackle difficult issues;
- Ability to give feedback which is practical and specific so it can be acted on;
- Good relations with other staff;
- Clear knowledge of what the role entails;
- Ability to convey a sense of mentor learning at the same time;
- Awareness of problems likely to face the mentee and an ability to judge when to involve other(s), either for additional support or for coaching in specialist skills.

It is important to recognise the benefits and reciprocal learning that takes place. Mentors learn as much from the mentees as they do from the mentor.

The school have found that the most successful trainees demonstrate the following skills and attributes.

- Good listening and interpersonal skills;
- Ability to reflect on own experiences, think about areas of development and how to action them.
- Readiness to accept support and respond positively to advice
- Recognition of the role of the mentor
- Willingness to act on advice and to try things out;
- The ability to draw appropriately on personal experience and make links between the practical experience and theory.

- Informed use of established school structures

### **What Are the Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor?**

All mentors have the responsibility to fulfil their role and provide the necessary guidance and support specific to the needs of the individual. Mentors need to:

- Ensure that trainees are fully informed of school policies, procedures and processes;
- Induct the trainee teacher into the class, providing information relating to the children, classroom organisation and the assessment framework;
- Provide the trainee teacher with appropriate experiences of teaching groups and whole classes and arrange suitable opportunities for trainee teachers to observe good practice and access the expertise of specialist staff;
- Support trainee teachers in achieving Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) by setting appropriate targets using the documentation provided by the ITE training provider;
- Arrange formal feedback meetings with trainee teachers to support planning, teaching and reflective evaluation (minimum once per week);
- Ensure that the trainee teacher engages in the whole life of the school, attending staff meetings and appropriate in-service events, meeting parents, attending parents' evenings and engaging in extra-curricular activities.
- Communicate any concerns about trainee teacher's performance at an early stage to the trainee teacher, SLT.
- Attend meetings and training courses with ITT training providers. Gaining a Broad Base of experience.

### **Potential Challenges and Obstacles**

The mentors and head teacher have identified a range of challenges and obstacles within the mentoring process. Although these challenges can occur, the majority can be overcome. One issue can be the age of the trainee in comparison to the school based mentor, although this generally dissolves over time as the relationship develops and the trainee can see the experience and knowledge the mentor has to offer. Trainees with previous experience from a range of backgrounds, including leadership roles will often need support to adapt their skills to the demands of teaching which can take time for them to accept. When working with overly self-critical trainees one successful support strategy is to encourage them to articulate a more balanced view of their practice, identifying their strengths and areas for development. Putting in place achievable targets, and providing appropriate support networks to help improve their self belief is key. All of these factors can result in the trainee being reluctant to accept criticism or act upon advice given, here the mentor needs to remain professional and seek the advice of the ITT tutor or head teacher who can provide support.

In order to avoid the trainee taking a disproportionate amount of the mentor's time we have found it useful to agree set times for discussion with a clear focus.

### **Outcomes of Mentoring**

All teachers have experienced professional benefits through their involvement in mentoring activities. Teachers are continuing to be learners, who are energised by the enthusiasm of trainees who are embarking on a new career. Teachers gain knowledge and understanding through training, observation and in particular evaluating personal practice. Mentoring is a powerful vehicle for enabling professional development needs identified in the performance management cycle.

### **Conclusion**

School based commitment to and involvement in ITT helps to assure the future quality of the teaching profession. It is a positive reflection of the high standard of ITT provision in Lincolnshire that 8 current staff were previously trainees of our partnership HEI provider. A HTLa has trained, with support of BG, to complete the foundation degree moving onto a B.Ed. Hons in Primary Education with recommendations for QTS, and have successfully been appointed as a teacher. All trainees who have undertaken placements at our school for their final practice have achieved a 100% pass rate.

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