An evaluation of innovative approaches to teacher training on the Teach First programme:

Final report to the Training and Development Agency for Schools

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In particular, we would like to thank the Teach First participants who have responded so positively to our surveys and requests for interviews, and we wish them well in their future careers, whatever they do.

We would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the work of other staff within IPSE who have contributed to this project: Marie-Pierre Moreau, who analysed the first participant questionnaire; Cathy Sullivan who undertook some fieldwork; Alistair Ross, who has had an overview of the quality of the evaluation; and Ian Barrett and Nathan Fretwell, who have provided invaluable administrative support.
1. Introduction

The Institute for Policy Studies in Education was commissioned by the Teacher Training Agency in 2003 to conduct an evaluation of innovative practice on the Teach First programme, with the aim of ensuring that ITT as a whole is able to benefit from innovative practice developed in the programme.

The evaluation was conducted between September 2003 and September 2005, the first two years of the Teach First programme. Thus it focuses on the period when the programme was starting up; by the end of the evaluation only one cohort had completed the two-year programme. Some of the data inevitably reflects the problems encountered in setting up a new programme. A key feature of the programme has been the consistent efforts made to resolve these, and to develop the programme. During that period Teach First operated only in London; in September 2006 it expands to Manchester, and further expansion to other cities is planned.

This first section introduces the Teach First programme and the evaluation.

1.1 The Teach First programme

Teach First came into being in 2003. It is a training programme for able graduates who commit themselves to teaching for two years in challenging London secondary schools. They undergo both teacher training (in the first year) and a programme of leadership training (starting in the summer term of the first year and extending into the second year).

Teach First adds to the wide range of routes into teaching in England. To become a teacher a person must be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), by demonstrating that they have met the Standards for QTS (TTA, 2003): these are outcome statements that set out what a person must know, understand and be able to do in order to be awarded QTS. Traditionally teachers were trained either on undergraduate (BEd or BA QTS) or postgraduate (PGCE) courses run by higher education institutions. From 1994 School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) was introduced; this is a full-time postgraduate training based in a school or group of schools. Other postgraduate provision include flexible routes designed for graduates with some teaching experience, and the Fast Track programme, offering augmented postgraduate training for those with the potential to become future leaders of schools (Ross and Hutchings, 2003).

Employment-based routes into teaching were first introduced in 1990. These were designed for well-qualified mature (over 24 years) people who need to earn a living while they train, and who can take on responsibility quickly. They include the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), the Registered Teacher Programme (RTP) and the Overseas Trained Teacher Programme (Ross and Hutchings, 2003). Numbers on employment-based routes have expanded rapidly since the GTP was introduced in 1998-9. In that year fewer than 100 trainees were enrolled on employment-based routes, compared with 6,820 in 2003-4 (the last year for which complete data is available (DfES, 2005). This represents 17% of those training to teach.

While the age limit was subsequently removed, the TDA website still recommends this as ‘a particularly good choice for mature people’.
Teach First is an employment-based route, but differs from those already in existence in key ways: it is designed for new graduates rather than mature people, it involves a two-year commitment, and participants teach in challenging schools. It is specifically designed to attract people who would not otherwise have become teachers, and it is anticipated and accepted that many of them will go on to careers in other sectors (hence the name, Teach First). There is a strong focus on recruiting teachers in shortage subjects.

It came into being after two business membership organisations, London First and Business in the Community, engaged management consultants McKinsey and Company on a pro bono basis to investigate how businesses could help improve pupil performance in London. The McKinsey team reported that the number of excellent teachers was one of the strongest predictors of improved pupil performance, especially in challenging schools. They proposed the creation of a programme targeted at top graduates, using the support of business and education leaders, ‘to bring additional excellent teachers into challenging schools for two years’ (Teach First website). This idea was inspired by the success of Teach for America, a programme set up in 1990 through which talented graduates are recruited to teach in the neediest urban and rural public schools in the USA (Kopp, 2001). From February 2002, a team including London First, Business in the Community, and Brett Wigdortz from the McKinsey team, worked on the development of Teach First, enlisting support from the business community, the government and the Teacher Training Agency.

Teach First is a small organisation with charitable status. The staff are generally young (the majority in their twenties); during the first year of the programme none of them had any teaching experience in the UK; just one had taught on the Teach for America programme. The Teach First board is composed of representatives from business and from education.

The Teach First programme had its first intake in 2003. Working with the Teacher Training Agency, a teacher training provider was recruited in January 2003, Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC). Recruitment of graduates (through advertising and activities on campus), and interviewing of applicants, are carried out by Teach First. Participants undertake a week’s structured school observation before joining the programme at a residential summer school lasting six weeks, two of which are spent in schools in Kent and London. At the end of this programme they are accepted as trainee teachers by the training provider. They are allocated placements to teach in challenging schools in the Greater London area, where they teach a timetable equivalent to that of a newly qualified teacher (NQT). During their first year they are supported by a professional mentor and a subject mentor in school, and by a professional tutor from CCCUC who visits on a fortnightly basis. They are required to attend six subject training days over the year (one each half term), and to have some experience in a second school (originally two weeks,

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2 In the second year an alumni director with teaching experience was appointed, and in the third year of the programme Teach First appointed a number of new members of staff from the first cohort to complete the programme.

3 CCCUC advise on this, and for the third intake have introduced an on-line subject knowledge audit which they check before a place is offered.

4 This week contributes to the total ‘second school experience’.
now reduced to one week). Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is normally gained at the end of the first year. From Teach First’s perspective, the decision to make QTS a core feature of the Teach First programme is an important aspect of the aspiration to retain a proportion of the participants in the teaching profession; the Chief Executive of Teach First told us that this decision, which contrasts with practice on the Teach for America programme, was taken following focus groups in this country where it became apparent that young people saw it as important that the programme led to the award of Qualified Teacher Status. The programme had to be delivered under the auspices of an accredited employment based ITT provider and in accordance with current relevant standards and requirements for employment-based ITT.

The leadership programme starts in the summer term of the first year. Participants may do a short internship during the school summer holidays; a wide variety of employers have offered places. In the second year the participants continue to teach as NQTs, and continue to follow the leadership programme. In addition they may have a career coach to support them in considering their various options, and Teach First organises employer seminars to offer additional insights. After two years the participants graduate from the programme. Some will continue to teach; others gain employment in a wide range of fields. It is expected that they will become leaders in whatever field they choose to enter, and that they will maintain contact with Teach First through the alumni network.

1.2 The evaluation
This evaluation was commissioned by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (now the Training and Development Agency for Schools). The aim of the evaluation, as defined by the TTA, was to ensure that initial teacher training (ITT) as a whole is able to benefit from any innovative practice developed through the Teach First programme. In identifying the innovative aspects of the programme, those listed in the TTA specification for this evaluation were a starting point. These were:

- recruitment targeted specifically towards high-achieving graduates in shortage subjects who would not otherwise consider teaching;
- intensive extended selection process involving in-depth interviews with business as well as education professionals;
- residential preparatory summer programme;
- high level of in-school support from trained mentors;
- innovative use of ICT in training;
- additional support for participating schools from ITT provider;
- training placements in groups of four and other support activities designed to build an esprit de corps;
- business mentoring, support and training placements;
- in the second year, option of continuing support from ITT provider.

(TTA specification for evaluation)

Of these, the planned innovations in the use of ICT did not take place because additional funding was not forthcoming for laptops, which were a key aspect of the ICT strategy. Of course, ICT plays a role in the teacher training, but the providers do not claim that practice as particularly innovative. A second planned innovation that has not taken place is the option of continuing support from the training provider for
second year participants; we are told that no schools decided to fund this optional activity.

We have added to the list aspects of the programme that were identified as innovative by many interviewees from CCCUC, Teach First and schools:

- recruitment (advertising and on-campus activity) and interviewing carried out by Teach First;
- placing trainees in challenging London schools, and positioning this as an attraction in recruitment;
- the expectation that Teach First participants will ‘make a difference’ in such schools;
- use of employment-based training for a younger age group (Teach First applicants are expected to be recent graduates or finalists still at university, but no age limit is specified);
- the two-year commitment to the programme, including both the training year and the induction year;
- the understanding that many of the participants may leave teaching at the end of the two years;
- the financial arrangements, which differ from those on other employment-based routes;
- attendance at a three day summer school at the end of the first year to complete CCCUC’s initial teacher training assessment requirements; this is also an opportunity for the new cohort to meet those gaining QTS.

This report is structured around the different aspects of innovation. The sections that follow therefore address recruitment; selection processes; the participants; the initial training; the school placement; school-based training; the two year commitment and the leadership training provided mainly in the second year; and the partnership of Teach First, the training provider and schools. In each of these sections we describe the innovation, indicate how it was perceived and evaluated by the various stakeholders, and identify good practice. We then consider outcomes in terms of retention on the programme and participants’ development and contribution as teachers, and their destinations at the end of the programme. At the end of the report we discuss how other forms of ITT might benefit from the successful innovative practice on the Teach First programme.

Through the course of this evaluation we have presented reports to the Teacher Training Agency at six-monthly intervals. These have been short reports with extensive appendices containing detailed analyses of the data we have collected. These reports have been used, along with other forms of evaluation conducted by Teach First and the training provider, to contribute to the development of the programme. This final report draws on material from the interim reports and their data appendices, as well as on the final data collected.

**Note: terminology**

During the course of this evaluation Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC) changed status, becoming Canterbury Christ Church University in July
The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has also changed names, becoming the Training and Development Agency for Schools. In both cases we have used the name current at the time we are writing about.

The terminology used to describe the various actors in this programme varies, and can lead to confusion. Those on the programme are referred to as participants in the context of the programme as a whole, but we found that school staff and tutors generally referred to them as trainees or Teach First trainees, or, in the second year, Teach First teachers, both abbreviated to TFTs. In this report we use trainees or participants or Teach First teachers depending on the context.

The tutors appointed by CCCUC to visit the trainees in school are identified in the Teach First Training Programme Handbook as professional tutors, but are often referred to as London tutors or Teach First tutors. However, we found that the trainees often referred to them as mentors, creating some confusion with the school-based mentors. We have referred to this group as ‘professional tutors’.

The labels of other key roles are more consistently used. In each school there is a professional mentor, who oversees progress and ensures that trainees are provided with ongoing professional support and development (generally including them in groups with other trainee teachers and/or newly qualified teachers). Each trainee also has a subject mentor in their school; the subject mentor meets the trainee each week to review development and set targets, as well as undertaking regular lesson observations.
2. Research design

2.1 Aims and objectives
The aim set out by the TTA for this evaluation is to ensure that ITT as a whole is able to benefit from any successful innovative practice developed through the Teach First programme. The implementation of innovative features is traced and examined in order to gain insights into how, and to what extent, they might be utilised elsewhere in ITT.

The objectives agreed at the outset were:

a) To identify innovative practice in the Teach First programme.
b) To evaluate the innovative practice in relation to:
   i. the development of the trainees as teachers, and schools’ perceptions of their effectiveness;
   ii. their views of the teaching profession and their future career aspirations;
   iii. the retention of trainees on the programme, and reasons for any withdrawals (i.e. any mismatch between expectations and reality; any issues in the training cited in relation to decisions to withdraw);
   iv. the perceptions of school staff and other stakeholders of the demands and benefits of involvement in Teach First.
c) To assess the potential for transferring effective innovation into other entry routes into teaching.

2.2 Research design
The research design included quantitative and qualitative elements.

Documentary analysis
The research team read and analysed a wide range of documentation. This included the Teach First website and publicity materials; some of the materials used in the selection process; the subject knowledge audit; the Training Programme Handbook; the Journal used by trainees throughout the training year; proformas used in assessing the trainees; and documentation relating to various aspects of the leadership training. Unfortunately we have not been able to access the Teach First extranet.

Surveys of Teach First participants and of schools
We have carried out repeated surveys of participants in the first two cohorts of the Teach First programme. This has enabled us to track the changing views of individuals. In particular, we have been able to review earlier responses from participants who have later withdrawn, and we have been able to track changing career aspirations over the course of the programme.

Our evaluation started in September 2003, after the first cohort had completed their initial six week residential course (the Summer Institute) and had started work in schools. At the point of writing the final report, this group have completed the two years of the Teach First programme. The three surveys of this group were conducted in November 2003 during the second half of their first term teaching; in July 2004
when they gained QTS; and between July and October 2005, when they had completed the two years (see Table 1).

With the second cohort, we were able to conduct a survey during their first few days at the Summer Institute. The subsequent surveys were at the same points in the training programme as the Cohort 1 surveys (November and July of the training year). Asking the same questions of each group allowed us to make direct comparisons of the two cohorts, thus shedding some light on how the programme was developing and evolving. However, not all questions asked of each cohort were identical; in some cases we were able to ask Cohort 2 in more depth about issues that had arisen from our analysis of Cohort 1 responses.

Table 1: Surveys of participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at the start of the Summer Institute</td>
<td>July 04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the first term of teaching</td>
<td>Nov 03</td>
<td>Nov 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the end of the training year, when gaining QTS</td>
<td>July 04</td>
<td>July 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on completion of the two year programme</td>
<td>July - Oct 05</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All the questionnaires have asked about career aspirations. The first survey with each cohort asked about reasons for joining Teach First. The first Cohort 2 survey also asked about expectations of the programme and of teaching, and examined whether participants had previously considered applying for a PGCE, and if so, why they had rejected the idea. The surveys during the first term of teaching focused on initial experiences in school, and to what extent the various elements of the Summer Institute were proving useful. The surveys on completion of QTS also focused on the teacher training.

The majority of the surveys were conducted in training sessions. CCCUC kindly allocated us 20 minute slots, so that participants completed the survey at that time, and handed it in before leaving the room. As a result we have generally achieved high response rates (Table 2).

Table 2: Participant questionnaire response rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at the start of the Summer Institute</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the first term of teaching</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the end of the training year, when gaining QTS</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on completion of the two year programme</td>
<td>51%</td>
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However, this was not possible with the final Cohort 1 survey, which was conducted by a variety of methods: by post, when participants were still in their schools in July; by including questionnaires in the pack given out at the Teach First graduation event in September; and by email. This resulted in a return rate of 51%. However, these returns were checked to see how far they matched the composition of the group as a whole (in terms of gender and subjects taught, and, by using Teach First destination data for a larger number of participants, in terms of destination). From this we found that those who responded were broadly representative of the group as a whole.
In addition to the participant questionnaires, we conducted a survey of Teach First schools in summer 2004. This was a very short questionnaire designed to investigate the perceptions of key staff in a wider group of schools than the qualitative sample.

**Interviews and focus groups with participants**

Focus groups were conducted with Cohort 2 participants during the Summer Institute. We were also able to draw on a report written by Dick Weindling, an independent advisor to the TTA, who conducted focus groups with Cohort 1 participants at their Summer Institute, before this evaluation started. We had originally intended to bring together a focus group of participants at repeated intervals through the course of the evaluation, but found that despite expressing willingness, in practical terms it was not possible for the participants to commit this time when they were teaching full timetables. Because of this, we increased the number of individual interviews conducted.

Repeated interviews were conducted with about twenty individuals in each cohort; the sample was purposively selected to cover the range of subjects taught, schools in inner and outer London; minority group trainees; those in schools with large and small numbers of participants; and schools with differing levels of challenge. With the first cohort, the initial interview was carried out face-to-face in January 2004, and subsequent interviews took place in the summer terms of 2004 and 2005; these were conducted by telephone by the same researchers as had conducted the face-to-face interviews. The Cohort 2 participants have been interviewed twice (January 2005 and September 2005); however, some of them were selected from the participants in the focus groups at the Summer Institute, so in these cases we have been able to track views over a longer period of time.

In addition we have interviewed ten participants who have withdrawn from the programme.

**Interviews with other stakeholders**

In 2003-4 we interviewed staff in six schools, and in 2004-5 in seven. Three schools were included in both years. Thus we have conducted interviews in ten schools in total, generally interviewing the headteacher, the professional mentor and one or more subject mentors. Initial interviews have always been face-to-face; repeat interviews have normally been by telephone.

Key staff at Teach First have been interviewed, in some cases on more than one occasion. They include the Chief Executive, Brett Wigdortz, and staff responsible for graduate recruitment, training and support, leadership development and alumni.

We have had regular meetings and/or interviews with key staff at CCCUC throughout the course of the evaluation. Interviews have been conducted with some subject tutors who have been involved in the Summer Institute and subject training days, and with professional tutors who visit participants in schools. (In some cases these groups overlap.)

We also interviewed a small sample of Teach First sponsors and supporters, and Institute of Education staff responsible for the education sector training on the Foundations of Leadership course.

Throughout the evaluation we have had regular meetings with the external adviser to the Teacher Training Agency for the programme, Mike Fitzgerald.
Observation

Observations have been carried out as follows:

- sessions during the Summer Institute 2004;
- subject training days;
- mentor training; Annual Professional Mentor Conference;
- shadowing professional tutor visits in schools;
- sessions of the Foundations of Leadership programme;
- Teach First recruitment events at two universities;
- Teach First assessment centres;
- events held by Teach First (for example, an evening on behaviour management);
- meetings to introduce school representatives to the programme;
- meetings of the London Schools Advisory Group and Staff Participants Liaison Committee.

In all cases the observations have helped us to understand the programme and have also informed the development of surveys and interview schedules.

Assessing level of innovation

One of the difficulties we faced is in assessing how innovative Teach First practices are in relation to those used in other forms of teacher training, which is itself constantly changing and developing. To help in this, towards the end of the evaluation, we held a focus group of senior managers from leading providers of ITT in England, where we asked about their practice in relation to the innovative aspects of the Teach First programme. This provided a valuable basis from which we could assess the extent to which some of the key features of Teach First were or were not unique and distinctive.

A second very useful source was the first report from the six-year study Becoming a Teacher, funded by the DfES, TDA and GTCE (Hobson and Malderez, 2005). The trainees discussed in this report started one-year teacher preparation courses, or their final year of longer courses, in 2004. Trainees from seven different routes including employment-based routes were involved in the study. The issues investigated included why the student teachers had decided to enter teaching as a career; why they had chosen the particular ITT programmes they were following; their preconceptions and expectations about ITT and teaching; their perceptions of the role of ‘theory’ in ITT; and their early experiences as student teachers.

The next sections focus on the innovative aspects of the programme, drawing on the data collected. At the end of each section we summarise the key points, and identify good practice in the initial teacher training provided by the Teach First programme. We are not, however, suggesting that these elements of good practice are unique to Teach First.

The final section of the report is a more in-depth discussion of the potential value of innovative practice on the Teach First programme for other forms of ITT and for policy makers.
3. Innovative aspects of the Teach First programme

3.1 Recruitment

There are a number of ways in which the Teach First programme recruitment processes are innovative. These include the group targeted, the messages to attract this group, and the processes used.

3.1.1 The target group and how they are attracted to the programme

The target group are high achieving graduates who would not otherwise have become teachers. Haines and Hallgarten (2002) showed that graduates from the Russell Group universities (which claim to represent research institutions of the highest quality in the country) are very much less likely to enter teaching than those in other universities. Overall, 3.7% of graduates enter teaching; the average for Russell Group universities was 2.7%, and for Cambridge, Bristol, Imperial College, UCL and LSE was less than 2%, with Oxford only just over 2%. Haines and Hallgarten concluded that teaching has a ‘low appeal in the elite universities, stemming from the poor perception of the profession by the graduates themselves’ (2002: 157).

Teach First has successfully targeted these elite universities; the majority of participants (83% in 2003; 74% in 2004) have degrees from Russell Group universities, with particularly large groups from Oxford and Cambridge, which together make up a third of Cohort 1 and a quarter of Cohort 2.

Participants are encouraged to see themselves as an elite group: the Teach First website states: ‘By joining Teach First … you will mark yourself out as a cut above the rest’. Teaching in challenging London schools is used as an attraction, and a sense of mission is required: people who are ‘dedicated to addressing the imbalances and injustices that cause poverty’. But participants are also promised a glowing personal future following their participation in the programme and the training it offers, not only in teaching but also in leadership and business skills: ‘Teach First unashamedly expects many of its participants to become future Ministers, CEOs, and serial entrepreneurs of our times’. Thus the programme appeals both to altruism and to ambition.

There is no doubt that this combination has proved extremely successful. In the first year (2003) 1,300 people applied for the 250 places available. Numbers applying in 2004 were slightly lower, but Teach First staff comment that the overall quality was higher than in the first year; there were fewer completely unsuitable applicants. Teach First report that they continued to attract large numbers of high quality applicants for the third cohort, despite a general downturn in graduate recruitment.

In 2005, Teach First reached 19th position on the Times list of the top 100 graduate employers (improving further on the 41st position achieved the previous year). This list of leading employers is compiled by asking more than 15,000 final year university students which organisations they feel offer the best prospects for graduates based on the training and development on offer, the quality of the employer’s recruitment promotions, and its overall reputation. This rapid rise indicates very clearly the impact that Teach First has succeeded in making among undergraduates.
No targets are set for numbers recruited; the emphasis is rather on accepting only high quality applicants. In 2003 186 participants registered at the Summer Institute, and in 2004, 197 did so. There had been hopes that in 2005 more than 200 participants would take up places; in the event 186 did so, but this was consistent with the emphasis on quality.

The young people recruited have been extremely well-received in schools; many interviewees talked about ‘the calibre’ of the Teach First trainees. The programme has also been successful in recruiting staff to teach in challenging schools that have experienced difficulties in recruitment. For most of the schools interviewed in the first year of the programme, the alternative to a Teach First trainee would have been a supply teacher or an overseas-trained teacher, which they considered far less satisfactory.

Table 3 shows the Cohort 2 participants’ ratings of the aspects of the programme that influenced their decision to apply. These are very similar to Cohort 1’s responses the previous year. Participants were asked to rate each factor on a scale from 1 (a major influence) to 4 (not an influence).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>mean rating Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping your career options open</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to make a contribution in areas of disadvantage</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ethos of the programme</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to teach in challenging schools</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining a professional training as a teacher</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for business coaching and internships</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to undertake the Foundations of Leadership course</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to form links with representatives of leading businesses</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestigious programme will look good on your CV</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to get a paid teaching job immediately after university</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to work in London</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A support network of mentors, tutors and other participants</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The shortness and intensity of the initial training programme</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to write in any other factors that had influenced their decision to join. These included the limited time commitment:

*The programme was very short and that appealed rather then getting dragged into a long term career programme.*

being able to use and communicate their degree subject:

*The opportunity to actually utilise what I learnt in my degree.*

and the attractions of teaching, and of this route into teaching:

*The flexibility of teaching – can travel with it.*  

*That it offered the opportunity to teach citizenship through a faster route.*
Although hard, I thought being a teacher would be fun.

Gain a qualification which may be useful in later life if starting a family.

Here participants were referring to aspects of teaching that have been widely recognised as attractions (Coulthard and Kyriacou, 2002; Edmunds et al., 2002; Hobson and Malderez, 2005).

The most highly rated factors on Table 3 are ‘keeping your career options open’, ‘the chance to make a contribution in areas of disadvantage’, and ‘the ethos of the programme’. A key aspect of the Teach First message has been to offer graduates a route which allows them to gain qualifications and useful experience while keeping their career options open. This has a very strong resonance among the group recruited.

We have found that only a minority entered Teach First with clear ideas about what career they might pursue in the future, and that even by the end of the two-year programme, many were still undecided. Questionnaires and interviews showed that in each cohort, the key attraction for the participants was that they could keep their options open. However, a minority had clear career plans, but were attracted by both the personal challenge and the opportunity to make a difference in an area of disadvantage:

*I mean I definitely didn’t come into it because I didn’t know what I wanted to do. … I think I really did know what I wanted to do, because I wanted to go into finance and I was very set on that, but then this came out of the blue completely. … it sounded such an exciting opportunity … the satisfaction of actually being able to do something good, to be able to maybe have that impact on kids.* (Cohort 1)

An important aspect of the message about keeping career options open is the notion that those participating in the programme will gain transferable skills that will be valued in other employment sectors. The Teach First website suggests that through teaching and the leadership training offered in the second year, participants are more likely to acquire transferable leadership skills than those working in large organisations:

*Through Teach First you will gain leadership, communication and influencing skills that are often difficult to build as a junior or graduate recruit in a large organisation. … Teach First participants, because of the nature of the school environment, must be highly adaptable and able to find creative solutions and approaches in an environment that can often be more dynamic than a typical corporate environment. Studies have shown that excellent teachers make more key decisions in a day than the average CEO. … The Teach First school and Foundations of Leadership experience provides the framework in which you can learn how to communicate effectively both downwards, to your peers, and upwards to business leaders and senior management. (Teach First website)*

The chance to make a difference in areas of disadvantage was highly rated by participants in both cohorts as an attraction of the programme. This was the first aspect of the programme that attracted some participants when they received a ‘milk-round’ email:

*They sent me an email about the challenging situation and the cold room without the radiators and I think I was sold from then really. … I looked into it quite a lot more and I was just intrigued, yes, I was just really taken by it and I thought, yes, that’s good.* (Cohort 1)

The passage referred to is on the Teach First website, and was mentioned by several participants. We quote it at length because it illustrates the way that Teach First
presents the challenge of teaching in a very different way from, for example, the TDA advertising campaigns.

It’s 8.59 a.m. on a cold Monday morning in December. You’re sitting in a badly-lit classroom somewhere in London – a rusty radiator rattles in the corner as it desperately tries to heat a freezing cold room. Outside the room you can hear 29 children waiting to enter, many of them carrying the weight of emotion and scarred by experiences that would destroy most adults. Many in the class have little comprehension of the importance of education and see school as an extension of a system that has so far failed them. They enter the room and look to you for guidance and hope. How would you react? Would you survey your class and see failure, believing that you do not possess the skills and ability to lead these pupils to a successful future? Or would you see this as a challenge that could be overcome by your creativity, drive, humility, high expectations and leadership skills, aided by the Teach First support system? (Teach First website)

Teaching is presented as a challenge, and as an opportunity to benefit those who are disadvantaged. The teacher is constructed almost as a hero, a person struggling with physical as well as emotional challenges. These are very appealing messages, particularly to a group who often see themselves as privileged, and who want to ‘give something back’ to society. The portrayal of the pupils as victims, and dependent on the teacher, appeals to a sentimental idealism that is often part of the motivation to enter teaching. These messages appeal to idealism and altruism. But this passage does not present the teacher as a member of a team of professionals facing mental as well as emotional challenges, and it portrays schools as lacking investment and modern technology.

3.1.2 The recruitment process

Initial recruitment and selection is carried out by Teach First staff; participants are not formally accepted onto the ITT training by the ITT provider until the end of the Summer Institute. The Teach First recruitment strategy involves having graduate recruitment managers who spend a considerable amount of their time on campus attracting potential applicants through a wide range of activities, and cultivating those who have accepted places. They are based in certain, largely Russell Group, universities. This strategy has been very successful in terms of recruitment from the targeted universities.

The two recruitment events we observed in universities were well-attended. Presentations in each case were made by Teach First staff and by a participant. At the larger event other participants were also available to talk to prospective applicants after the presentation. The contributions by participants appeared to be a very effective way of conveying what the programme involves and what it is like to be a participant, and appeared to motivate those in the audience. Many participants explained in interview how motivating the event they had attended had been:

[The Teach First staff] were just so passionate and enthusiastic and I think everyone in the room was just ‘brain-washed’ by them, just their enthusiasm really, like shone through, and it made everyone positive, and I thought, yes, that’s what I really want to do.
(Cohort 1)

The Teach First website was also described by participants as effective in attracting them to the programme:

The Teach First website makes teaching seem attractive. It’s like you can inspire children, you can challenge them, you’re going to be working in a really challenging school, and that makes you think, yeah, I could make a difference, and that makes me
think about teaching in a different way … they make you think about teaching as a profession in a more respected way. (Cohort 1)

The Teach First Director of Graduate Recruitment told us that the marketing strategy now aims to ‘brand’ Teach First in a way that is recognisable from year to year, so that undergraduates will instantly recognise Teach First advertising. One participant each year will be used as a ‘brand hero’, featuring on all publicity materials. Advertising is still based mainly in the elite universities, but some posters have been placed more widely – for example, on London bus shelters.

While in the first year Teach First had to inform people of what the programme involved, as it becomes more established, more graduates will know what it is. Our Cohort 2 questionnaire showed that over 40% of that group had first heard of Teach First from friends, including Cohort 1 participants.

The participants themselves were described in interviews as an effective selling point; joining Teach First would mean joining an elite group:

Some of the successful applicants they showed they’d obviously taken some of the top cream of the crop … if I join this group it’s going to be very good motivation, because they’ve all succeeded in everything they’ve done, so that it gives you a bit more kudos, because you’re thinking … anything I do afterwards I’ll be one of a group of people who are known as Teach First, and that was one of the reasons why I did it. (Cohort 1)

Teach First, then, has succeeded in making teaching acceptable among a group who had perceived it as having low status, and it has done this by constructing the participants as an elite group:

This scheme came along and I think what got me – it’s not something I’m proud of – it got me because it had kind of the kudos again … it said you can be good and still come into teaching and you will not have to go through the grind of PGCE. (Cohort 1)

Participants’ views of the PGCE are considered in more detail in Section 3.3.3.

While the recruitment strategy is clearly successful, several participants reported in interview that they felt ‘embarrassed’ by some Teach First advertising and publicity, which suggested that they would go in and ‘perform miracles’, when in reality they were unqualified teachers with no experience, trying their best.

I think Teach First needs to consider how they word some of their advertising, because it can sound – you know, you can understand why teachers are saying ‘Who do these people think they are?’ You can really understand it, and then you know I was embarrassed … from what you read and from what people read about Teach First it’s almost like we are expected to come and perform miracles, and actually we come with no experience of the school, not knowing anything, and then you’re struggling. (Cohort 1)

We also found that in the first year of the programme, some school staff were suspicious and antagonistic about the Teach First programme; interviewees suggested that Teach First publicity had contributed to this, and was putting them in a difficult position. Some Cohort 2 participants placed in schools new to the programme reported similar concerns, as did a number of school interviewees in the second year of the programme:

‘You are the saviours, you are the crusaders going into these schools.’ I don’t think that’s helped, I think it’s important to recognise the quality of the people we’ve got. With due respect, there’s a lot of very able people in this school already. (Headteacher)
Thus, while the recruitment strategy is obviously successful in attracting outstanding graduates to the programme, a number of people expressed reservations about the messages presented.

3.1.3 Summary: recruitment

- Teach First has been successful in recruiting from Russell Group universities.
- Key attractions for potential participants are keeping career options open and making a contribution in an area of disadvantage.
- The prestige surrounding the programme is also an important attraction.
- Teach First recruitment emphasises that teaching offers transferable skills.
- There is a danger that Teach First recruitment messages could be perceived as implying that teachers currently working in challenging schools are not doing a good job.

Key elements of good practice in relation to recruitment are the emphasis on transferable skills, which has enabled Teach First to recruit people who are not seeing teaching as a career for life, and the use of Teach First participants in recruitment.
3.2 Selection processes

3.2.1 The assessment centre

As indicated in the previous section, assessment and initial selection of applicants is carried out by Teach First rather than by the training provider. At the end of the Summer Institute they are formally accepted onto the ITT programme by the provider.

The selection processes used by Teach First have been developed from those used in business, and altered to fit the particular demands of teaching – for example, by adding ‘humility, respect and empathy’ to the list of competencies. The processes involve far more resource in terms of time and personnel than is used by most ITT providers; at the sessions we observed, approximately two hours of staff time was spent on each candidate, in addition to the time spent assessing the initial application form and completing the paperwork. As a result the process offers greater insights into the applicants’ experience and personal qualities. The Teach First staff involved in the process include both experienced graduate recruiters and staff who have joined Teach First soon after completing their own degrees. During the period of our evaluation none of the recruitment team had experience as teachers, but since then some Teach First participants who have completed the two years of the programme have been recruited to join the team.

Selecting the ‘right people’ is seen as key to the success of the whole programme. The Chief Executive told us that the aim is to recruit people who ‘just naturally have some innate ability to be great teachers’, and commented that if the participants were not ‘the right sort of people … the whole thing would fall apart.’

The selection process involves assessing candidates against a range of competencies. These are broadly similar to those used in any graduate recruitment. As the programme has developed, these have been more tightly defined, and there are some changes: for example, ‘resilience’ has been added to the list in response to participant feedback.

Teach First competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINAL</th>
<th>REVISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>positive outlook</td>
<td>personal responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal responsibility</td>
<td>personal responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment to equity</td>
<td>knowledge (TF and subject)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding of programme</td>
<td>self evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self evaluation / critique</td>
<td>leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teamwork</td>
<td>initiative and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical thinking</td>
<td>communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication skills</td>
<td>humility respect and empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humility respect and empathy</td>
<td>resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection takes place at ‘assessment centres’ held at Canary Wharf, where Teach First has its offices. During the day each candidate takes part in three activities, in each of which they are assessed by a different member of the Teach First team:
• an individual ‘critical behaviour interview’;
• a group problem-solving activity based on a case study of decision-making in a school context; and
• a seven minute ‘lesson’ in which the Teach First assessors are joined by a teacher.

After the lesson and the problem-solving activity, candidates have a brief interview with an assessor to evaluate their own performance. What they say in this context is taken into account in the overall assessment.

Candidates are allocated scores in each activity for each of the competencies being assessed in that activity. At the end of the day the assessors meet together to decide which candidates to accept. We were told that the decision is not made simply on the basis of the points allocated, but rather involves a broader discussion of the candidates. However, we were not able to observe this part of the day.

Each element of this process has been reviewed and revised during the period of the evaluation; the way each competency is being assessed is now very explicit. In particular the problem-solving activity has been revised in such a way that all the candidates contribute, including those who are less extrovert.

Our observations of assessment days record a professional and thorough process in which the potential of candidates is thoroughly explored. We noted occasional inconsistencies in the way candidates were questioned, such that some were afforded different opportunities to shine, or to demonstrate weakness. But as we did not have access to the final discussion deciding who would be offered places, we are not able to comment on how such inconsistencies were taken into account in decision-making.

Participants generally described their experience of the assessment as positive; they felt that the Teach First staff were genuinely enthusiastic and interested, and considered that their capabilities were thoroughly assessed.

It was really intense. I quite liked it because it was a rigorous assessment and if you weren’t the right person you couldn’t have blagged your way through it. You really had to show your skills, and they had teachers there looking at your lessons as well to assess you, which I thought was really good. (Cohort 1 participant)

It was all sort of very – so business-like really because the office is in Canary Wharf. So that surprised me a bit, in a way because it was ever so different from what I’d done with the PGCE interviews and it just seemed to be very, a lot more slick and a lot more up to date. They really seemed to know exactly what they wanted and I think it was quite clear from the interviews and the exercises we did, you know, who they were looking for. (Cohort 2 participant)

The experience of meeting other candidates is an important aspect of the day: many Teach First participants have referred to other candidates they met at their assessment centre as a reason for accepting the place they were offered.

Stakeholders have been extremely positive about the assessment process in relation to the personal qualities of those selected. Some school respondents commented that the rigorous selection process was one reason for taking Teach First participants, or identified ‘rigorous selection’ as an area where other forms of teacher training could

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5 Section 3.3.3 shows that the vast majority of Teach First participants would not otherwise have become teachers. However, a small number in each cohort, including the participant quoted, had applied to other forms of ITT, and were therefore able to compare their experiences of interviews for different routes.
learn from the Teach First programme. However, it should be noted that in selecting candidates Teach First has a strong field of applicants, and possibly recruitment (and the nature of the programme) should be seen as responsible for the calibre of the candidates, rather than exclusively the selection process.

A number of school respondents have raised questions about the role of teachers in the process, which is far more limited than on most other ITT routes. Currently they join the Teach First assessors to observe and assess the lesson, but are not involved in other parts of the process, or in the decisions about which candidates to accept. Several teachers felt that they could play a useful role in the self-evaluation interview that followed the lesson, because their experience of teaching and lesson evaluation would be useful in assessing the responses given. Moreover, some school respondents commented that a stronger involvement by teachers in the selection process would have prevented some weaker participants from being selected:

*These two young women – I just can’t see how anyone could look at them and not see that they are going to have problems. … I am not saying anything personal against this girl but she is going to walk into the classroom and she looks like a frightened rabbit and our kids are going to go for her.*  
(Professional mentor)

Weak Teach First participants are discussed in Section 3.3.4; there are very few of them. In contrast to the mentor quoted above, some school staff expressed confidence in Teach First’s selection procedures:

*We feel quite confident about the recruitment strategies of Teach First so that if they say to us, ‘We’ve got someone to teach English for you’, we’d be really confident that that person had been well-recruited and was going to be well-briefed and trained over the summer and orientated and would be just as viable as somebody we’d recruited who’d just completed the PGCE.*  
(Headteacher)

The Teach First staff argue that they are trained recruiters, and that the teachers’ presence would not add anything useful at the decision-making stage.

### 3.2.2 Subject knowledge

Teach First aims to recruit teachers who will have excellent subject knowledge. However, in the first year of the programme, we found that about 15% of the participants were training to teach subjects that were not the same as their degree subjects, and in some cases, they said they did not have adequate knowledge of the subjects they were timetabled to teach. Moreover, even those with degrees in the relevant subject still need to acquire knowledge of the subject as taught in school (as well, of course, as knowledge about how to teach the subject). These issues have been tackled by the development of an on-line subject audit used for 2005 entry as part of the assessment of applicants.

Following the assessment centre, successful candidates are offered a place conditional on satisfactory completion of the subject audit. This is an online proforma referring applicants to the relevant parts of the National Curriculum, and asking them to assess their own subject knowledge against the different attainment targets, stating in what context that knowledge was acquired. They are asked to indicate areas of strength and of weakness, and to write an action plan showing how they intend to develop the necessary subject knowledge in the period leading up to the start of the Summer Institute. The completed audit is sent to CCCUC where the relevant subject tutor assesses it and writes comments, often suggesting ways of further developing the action plan.
Some applicants have had their initial audits rejected. They are then able to resubmit, or to try a different subject, or in some cases to withdraw, realising that they do not have what is needed. Those whose audits are accepted will be trained in, and placed in school to teach, that subject.

One value of this is that it heightens applicants’ awareness of the importance of subject knowledge, and alerts them to the need to fill the gaps in their own knowledge before they attend the Summer Institute. It can also be updated and used by participants as a basis for work with subject mentors in schools.

The subject audit was introduced in the selection of the third cohort of Teach First participants. As they were not included in our evaluation, we have not been able to investigate whether the process of completing the subject knowledge audit has resulted in participants being better prepared in terms of the subject knowledge needed in schools, or whether they have used the audits as a basis for ongoing discussion and development, as suggested above.

3.2.3 Summary: selection processes

- Recruitment (through advertising and on-campus activities) is carried out by Teach First, and interviewing is carried out by graduate recruiters at Teach First, with the ITT provider advising on procedures, and from the third intake, checking an on-line subject knowledge audit. Participants are accepted onto the initial teacher training programme by the ITT provider only at the end of the Summer Institute.

- The selection process involves assessing candidates against a range of competencies.

- Participants felt they were thoroughly assessed, and said that meeting other candidates further encouraged them to join the programme.

- Schools generally feel the selection is effective, but some argue that teachers should be more strongly involved in the process.

- An on-line subject knowledge audit has been developed to assess subject knowledge in relation to National Curriculum attainment targets, and to encourage participants to work to develop their subject knowledge before the start of the programme.

Good practice in selection includes the use of very clear criteria for selection in the form of competencies, and the on-line subject knowledge audit.
3.3 **The participants**

As indicated above, the participants in Teach First are selected to be high academic achievers, often in shortage subjects\(^6\), who would not otherwise have become teachers, and who have outstanding personal qualities that give them the potential to become leaders. We consider each of these in turn.

### 3.3.1 High academic achievers

In the first cohort, the vast majority had first or upper second class degrees. However, a significant minority (13%) graduated with lower second class degrees. Obviously a lower second is acceptable for entry to teaching, but part of the justification for this route into teaching is that these are all academic high-fliers, and this does not seem to be universally the case. While the Teach First website suggests that participants will be in ‘the top three per cent of graduates academically’, Teach First staff argued in interview that personal qualities are more important as assessment criteria.

The majority of Teach First participants join the programme directly from university, and in many cases their degree classifications are published only when they are attending the Summer Institute. In the second year of the programme, there was a systematic process of interviewing those who achieved lower second class degrees to explore why their results were poorer than anticipated, and to evaluate their commitment to the programme. As a result of this, one participant who achieved a third class degree was asked to leave the programme. The degree classifications achieved by the second cohort were higher than for the first cohort (Figure 1). Both cohorts achieved considerably higher classifications overall than entrants to PGCE courses.

![Figure 1: Degree classifications: Cohort 1 and Cohort 2](image)

* Figures for PGCE students draw on HESA data for 1999-2000 cited in Haines and Hallgarten (2002). Data for degree classifications of those completing initial teacher training published by the DfES do not distinguish between upper and lower second, and so are less useful in this comparison.

The academic level of achievement of participants is evident not only in subject knowledge, but also in analytical skills. School mentors commented on their strengths in self-evaluation, and the way they raised the quality of discussion in groups of trainees and NQTs.

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\(^6\) Currently mathematics; science; English (including drama); ICT; design and technology; modern languages; RE; and music (TDA website).
Because they learn so quickly and because they are so smart, it’s not an onerous task and the rewards are, you know, they’re phenomenal because they all work hard for you and they’ll take things on board. (School mentor)

3.3.2 Teachers of shortage subjects
One of the initial aspirations for Teach First was that the programme would recruit graduates in shortage subjects. While this has remained a major emphasis, a wide range of subjects have in fact been recruited, with the result that some of the subject groups have been very small indeed (Figure 2). This clearly creates resourcing issues for the training provider, and offers those trainees less of a peer group in which to share ideas.

Figure 2: Numbers of participants training to teach each subject: Cohort 1 and Cohort 2

![Bar chart showing numbers of participants training in different subjects]

Figure 2 shows that there has been a strong emphasis in recruitment in maths and science (together making up 43% of Cohort 1 and 38% of Cohort 2). This is a considerable strength of the programme.

3.3.3 People who would not otherwise have become teachers
Teach First aims to accept only those people who would not otherwise have entered the teaching profession; they are looking to recruit a new group, not to ‘poach’ from other providers. We found that the vast majority of participants in both cohorts fitted this description. Candidates are asked about applications to other forms of teacher training when they apply to Teach First, and those who say they have applied elsewhere are rejected by Teach First. However, there is evidence from interviews and questionnaire responses that a small minority of Cohort 1 did in fact intend to become teachers before they enrolled for Teach First, and some had applied for other routes into teaching (PGCE, Fast Track); this was definitely the case for two Cohort 2 participants out of the 22 that we interviewed. One of these had been offered a place to do a PGCE:

I did actually apply ... and got a place for a PGCE which I didn’t tell Teach First at my interview obviously because you’re not supposed to do that. (Cohort 2)

The other had applied to two PGCE courses and the GTP, and had been rejected by all three. Teach First was therefore a last resort to get into teaching. This illustrates that simply asking applicants whether they have applied for other forms of teacher training is not a foolproof way of checking.
About 40% of participants in each cohort said they had previously considered the possibility of teaching and of doing a PGCE, but had decided against it. Others had never considered teaching, and had been entirely persuaded by the Teach First presentations and marketing material. Those who had thought about becoming teachers and decided against it offered a variety of reasons for their decisions. Some of these were to do with teaching as a career, and others to do with the PGCE itself.

In the initial questionnaire completed by Cohort 2, the factors that emerged as most important in the decision not to take a PGCE were the desire to keep career options open rather than training for a single profession, and not wanting to study for a further year (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Major Factor</th>
<th>Minor Factor</th>
<th>Not Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Want to keep career options open rather than training for a single profession</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not want to undertake a further year’s study</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to start earning</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought PGCE would not be sufficiently interesting</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGCE study does not offer the opportunity to make a difference in a challenging school</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not like the image and status of teaching as a career</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While in the questionnaire, the PGCE seemed to be a greater deterrent than the idea of teaching, the qualitative data indicated that many participants did have concerns about teaching as a career. Some did not want to be like the teachers who had taught them at school, described by one participant as ‘archaic dinosaurs’ (Cohort 1). Others had been advised against teaching on the grounds that having attended Oxbridge / another prestigious university, they were ‘too good’ to become teachers:

*Everyone at Oxford is like, ‘Oh you don’t want to go to Oxford and be a teacher’. (Cohort 1)*

*A lot of my teachers were saying, ‘Teaching? You’re too good to be a teacher and you’ve got more potential’, and they were saying that teaching … hasn’t got enough kudos, hasn’t got enough possibilities as a career… I was being told that teaching wasn’t fulfilling your potential. (Cohort 1)*

The second quote shows how achieving a good degree from a good university was linked with having a prestigious career, and teaching was not seen in this light:

*Teaching is not very prestigious. They [my family] think it’s something you are doing because you can’t do anything else. (Cohort 2)*

Teaching was also seen as a job for life. This was problematic for participants both because they wanted to keep their options open, and because some felt that going into teaching labelled one in a negative way:

*Doing teaching now, the stigma … that it is a vocation. It is one of the few things that is regarded as a job for life, rightly or wrongly. (Cohort 1)*

It was felt that taking a PGCE is equivalent to making a commitment to teaching as a main career. This is partly because of the time invested, but also because ‘PGCE’
looks vocational on the CV, and may be viewed negatively by employers in other sectors:

I didn’t want to embark on a pigeonhole teaching career. (Cohort 1)

I did think about it [PGCE] but I was quite concerned about doing a PGCE and then that being my only route and then that would be sort of my only option for ever, and at that point I wasn’t sure whether that was what I wanted to do for ever, and I didn’t want to narrow my choices that much. (Cohort 1)

Many did not want to study for a further year:

For Teach First, keeping my options open … and I wanted to work straight away. I didn’t really want to stay on for another year to do the PGCE, not for any reason, I just wanted to be working at that point, so Teach First gave me an opportunity to keep my career options open for the long term, and also gave me the kind of fast progression I wanted straight away. (Cohort 1)

In addition many of those who had been contemplating a PGCE considered that it would not be sufficiently interesting:

PGCE … looked boring to be honest. Not the time in school but just the lectures, and so much of it seemed common sense, and it seems like if I read a book I’ll know it. And what I want is to get in there and teach. (Cohort 1)

I had been told by several Oxbridge friends that the PGCE would be frustrating as it would not challenge or stretch me enough. (Cohort 2)

However, the interviewees who expressed negative views about either teaching or the PGCE, argued that, unlike the PGCE, Teach First ‘kind of just opened your options rather than closing them down’ (Cohort 2). They also felt that Teach First made teaching (and training to become a teacher) attractive, and offered ‘prestige’ and ‘kudos’. Being a Teach First teacher was seen as more prestigious than being an ‘ordinary’ teacher:

There is not much status associated with teaching, whereas this scheme gave it a bit extra.

This perception is further explored in the final chapter.

3.3.4 Personal qualities

Schools have commented that the participants are highly professional, have an excellent attendance record, are very hard-working, and are determined to succeed.

They are very erudite, extremely keen, extremely enthusiastic individuals who obviously had an absolutely passionate desire to want to make a change in the school. (Professional mentor)

Outstanding, dedicated, resourceful, energetic. (Headteacher)

They’re the nicest people and they’re so hard working and so committed they’re so enthusiastic, and you know 99.9% of them are so willing to learn. And they’re very sharp. So that when you do say: ‘you should try this, this and this’, they’ve got – they use their own initiative and they learn very quickly and they’ve done a tremendous job they really have. (Subject mentor)

There is a wide consensus that in relation to their personal qualities, selection processes have been extremely effective.

However, some concerns were expressed. Many school interviewees pointed out that all the participants are people who have a record of success, and as a result some of
them have found it very hard being in a position where they need to ask for help, or to
deal with what they perceive as failure. In some cases they have not admitted to
difficulties until they reach crisis point. Moreover, in order to maintain their record of
success, the majority work extremely hard, and as a result many have put themselves
under considerable stress and become exhausted.

A small minority of participants were described by schools in less positive terms,
using words such as ‘slapdash’ and ‘weaker’. The tutors we interviewed pointed out
that a minority of the participants did not take paperwork seriously, and did not keep
it up-to-date (two experienced tutors estimated this to be 10-15%, predominantly
men). The tutors told us that such participants had also often spent little time on the
written assignments, and in some cases had to resubmit them. This was attributed to
‘attitude’ or ‘arrogance’ rather than weakness. Only a small minority of the
participants were considered to be weak. Where this was the case, school interviewees
reported that a great deal of extra support was needed. This led the school staff to
question the way that participants are selected, the placement procedures, and indeed
the balance of costs and benefits to the school of involvement in the programme. In
the seven schools where we interviewed staff during the summer term 2005, three of
the 28 Cohort 2 participants (i.e. 10%) were described as ‘weak’. While the number of
weaker trainees is small, the impact on the schools concerned is large, both in terms of
additional support needed, and impact on the pupils they teach.

3.3.5 Summary: the participants

- The participants recruited have higher degree classifications than those entering
  PGCE courses.
- Recruitment of trainees for shortage subjects has been very successful.
- The vast majority of the participants would not otherwise have gone into teaching.
  Some had considered the PGCE, and rejected it. They felt that it is seen as a
  preparation for a lifelong career in teaching, and would label them in a way that
  would not be attractive to other potential employers.
- In comparison with the PGCE, Teach First was seen as prestigious by participants.

Teach First is developing good practice in terms of its stated aims, of securing
entrants who have higher classes of degree from a range of leading universities. The
ways in which they are promoting teaching within the Teach First approach is seen as
attractive by people who would not otherwise have given serious consideration to
teaching, whether as a short term or longer term career path.
3.4 The initial training

3.4.1 The Summer Institute programme

All participants are asked to undertake a week’s observation in a school before joining the Institute, and they are sent guidance about how to observe.

The Teach First Summer Institute lasts six weeks from late June to early August. It is a residential course held in Canterbury. Two of the six weeks are based in schools: one week in a Kent school, and one week in the London school in which the participant will be working. The other four weeks are spent on a programme of subject studies and professional studies. In addition, there are a number of activities designed to develop esprit de corps.

The timing of the Summer School is constrained, in that the majority of participants are completing their degree studies in June, and so the start date cannot be any earlier. At that time in the year, many of the schools are not operating a normal timetable, and participants are not necessarily able to see any ‘normal’ teaching going on, or to teach themselves. After the first year of the programme, the two weeks in schools were switched round, thus bringing London week forward, in order to improve the quality of the induction to the school in which the participant would be working.

One advantage of a residential course is that it is possible to demand full attendance at sessions. Sessions started at 8.15 am; while participants said they did not appreciate this at the time, they realised it was a stepping-stone to accustom them to getting to school on time.

Subject studies and professional studies are similar to those on other ITT courses, though a stronger emphasis on lesson planning has been introduced following feedback from the first cohort. An additional form of input at the Summer Institute has been a series of optional workshops held in the evenings. These have been presented by a wide variety of people including Teach for America teachers, and, after the first year, participants from previous Teach First cohorts, as well as teachers in the challenging London schools that trainees are placed in. The intention is also to inspire participants by having ‘good role models’:

You want to make sure they get inspired by excellent professional teachers who can show them that things you might not think of as possible actually are possible. (TF Chief Executive)

In Kent schools many of the participants have been involved in activity weeks, where they are able to work with groups of pupils – though not necessarily to teach. Some had opportunities to undertake team teaching. Others have had no opportunity at all to teach. In London schools week, the emphasis has been on participants finding out about the school and collecting relevant documentation including schemes of work and timetables. Where possible, these are then used as a basis for planning activities in subsequent sessions. Again, while some participants had opportunities to teach, many did not. From the second year, guidance booklets for mentors and participants have set out the learning aims for these weeks.

During the second Institute, Cohort 2 undertook two written assignments. These form part of the QTS assessment, together with two undertaken later in the year. In the previous year the assignments were undertaken after the participants were in school:
bringing them forward into the Summer Institute increased pressure at that point in time, but considerably reduced it later on.

A variety of activities at the Summer Institute are designed to create an *esprit de corps* among the participants. These include, for example, activities run by the army, but also shorter inputs at, for example, the early morning plenary sessions. In addition, various distinguished visitors have given guest lectures each year, one theme of which has often been to congratulate the participants for joining Teach First, making them feel special and generally boosting morale. Teach First regard it as particularly important that participants should ‘feel part of Teach First from the start, feel part of this group as something to motivate them in the coming year’ (TF Chief Executive).

One aspect of this *esprit de corps* is the development of a shared vision of excellence based on high expectations of both pupils and participants. This is explicitly set out in the *Teach First Training Programme Handbook*:

> An excellent Teach First teacher has high and demanding expectations of pupils, while using knowledge of each pupil’s prior attainment as a starting point for teaching and learning. He or she has high and demanding expectations of him or her self as an instigator of pupil learning and achievement. An excellent Teach First teacher believes that each pupil is capable of achieving academic success, regardless of his or her prior academic attainment. …. An excellent Teach First teacher produces outstanding daily lesson and unit plans, which drive pupils towards the overall goals for academic achievement for each class. He or she teaches inspirationally and demonstrates how the planned goals can be achieved. … (*Teach First Training Programme Handbook 2004-2005*, p.10)

This vision is articulated throughout the Summer Institute.

As with all other aspects of the Teach First programme, the Summer Institute has been evaluated each year by CCCUC and Teach First, and has been developed in the light of feedback.

### 3.4.2 Perceptions of the Summer Institute

Teach First participants have been asked to comment on the Summer Institute at several points in the programme: while they were attending it (through focus group discussions); in the following November (through questionnaires); and in the following spring term (through individual interviews). The research team observed some sessions of the 2004 Summer Institute.

As a consequence of the speed with which the programme was set up, in the first year the programme documentation was not all available until October. This resulted in some problems, because once participants were teaching in schools, they did not all read or make effective use of what was provided. In the second year everything was ready in good time, and participants commented favourably on the presentation and detail included in the various handbooks (for the whole programme, the Summer Institute and subject and professional studies).

Table 5 shows the mean ratings given by Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 participants in the following November for the influence on their teaching of different aspects of the Summer School.

These survey ratings, and also participants’ responses in interviews and focus groups, indicate that the changes to the programme for Cohort 2 were successful. In November, several aspects of the Summer Institute were given significantly higher
ratings in relation to their impact on participants’ teaching than had been the case the previous year. These were subject studies, workshops and London schools week. However, professional studies achieved a significantly lower overall rating from Cohort 2 than it had from Cohort 1. This was perhaps because the Cohort 2 participants wanted to indicate that in comparison, they found other aspects more useful. For Cohort 3 the professional tutors who supervise the trainees in school were more closely involved in the planning and delivery of professional studies in an attempt to make the relevance more explicit.

Table 5: Influence on your teaching of the Teach First Summer Institute: comparison of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 mean responses, Nov 03 and Nov 04. (1 = a major influence, 4 = not an influence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>cohort 1</th>
<th>cohort 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject studies</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>London schools week</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<td>Workshops</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional studies</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent schools week</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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</table>

Table 5 shows that both cohorts reported that subject studies had the most influence on their teaching and Kent schools week the least. The low mean ratings for Kent schools week conceal a wide range of opinion. Those who had opportunities to teach rated the week highly:

*We had the opportunity to teach the same lesson to three separate groups. So it gave us the opportunity to see ‘okay well what didn’t work in the first lesson? How can I improve that? What should we do different in the next lesson?’ So it gave us the opportunity to kind of reflect on our teaching and then deliver the same material and see how it worked.*

(Cohort 2)

Those who did not teach gave much lower ratings. One participant described how she was placed in the kitchen during a school activities week and had to work with pupils to produce a three-course meal for members of staff:

*You’re … working in quite an informal environment and you’re just like treating them [more] like little brothers than pupils. So I just thought it was a week I kind of had to endure rather than learn something and I still hadn’t taught at all yet. So that’s quite intimidating and daunting.*

(Cohort 2)

A minority of participants reported little contact with teachers or pupils, and felt that they were simply used as cheap labour:

*We were put on task going through all the SAT papers and writing down into a spreadsheet if they got 1 out of 1 or 0 out of 1, it was like … we knew they just didn’t want to do it in their holidays. I did try and bring it up and say, look, we really aren’t here to do this.*

(Cohort 2)

London schools week attracted higher ratings than Kent week, mainly because this is the introduction to the schools in which participants will work for two years:

*London week was probably my favourite week of the Summer Institute. … It just kind of made me realise or remember why I was doing the scheme, because it made me get in contact with the school I was going to teach in.*

(Cohort 2)

Again the experiences were very varied:
I had an excellent induction week, the school were really, really organised and the whole week was timetabled. ... there was four of us from Teach First, and ... about 11 other NQTs starting in September and we were all together that week. So on the Monday we all had an official induction to the school, one of the deputy heads spoke to us. ... You know, I feel completely happy about going in September, we were taken around the school, we got to know some pupils. ... We managed to go through the discipline policies, teaching, homework, all the different policies, all the behaviour management, we got all of that. ... We spent time with our departments, we were given schemes of work, we got to observe lessons, we got all the resources we’d need for September and we got invited to the staff social at the end of the week, so that was nice to get to know all the staff. It was a really, really good week.  (Cohort 2)

CCCUC have worked hard to encourage all schools to provide induction weeks of this quality. For example, they have circulated programmes from schools such as the one described above. However, in some schools the experience was much less well-organised:

No time-tabling had been done for next year, like no idea of schemes of work, no idea who I would be teaching – which was a bit of a let down because it would be really handy at that stage and even now [early August] to know who I’m going to be teaching come September. Have some idea at least.  (Cohort 2)

A factor that limited the effectiveness of London schools week for some participants in both the first two years of the programme was that not all of them had been placed in schools at that point in time. Therefore some were not able to visit their schools, find out about their timetables and collect relevant schemes of work. In such cases the week was not seen as useful. Other elements of the Summer Institute were also seen as less useful by such participants, because they were not able to start planning for September. Moreover, the prospect of starting teaching in a totally unknown school in September created considerable anxiety for these participants.

This issue was effectively addressed for the third cohort, who were all placed before the start of the Summer Institute. However, as we have not collected data from this group we have not been able to assess how much difference this has made to their perceptions of the value of the Institute.

The fact that some participants had no opportunities to teach in school during the six weeks training is clearly a limitation of the Summer Institute. CCCUC have made strenuous and imaginative efforts to ensure that they do get such opportunities, but it is undoubtedly difficult to arrange this in July.

As Table 5 showed, subject studies has consistently been seen by participants as the most effective element of the Summer Institute. They felt that this was where they obtained the practical information they needed about the curriculum and how to deliver it. They planned lessons and ‘taught’ each other. This was particularly important for those who had had no opportunity to teach in schools. Some subject groups were particularly appreciative of the enthusiasm of their tutors.

Table 5 shows that the second cohort gave significantly higher ratings to the workshops than the first cohort:

They [the workshops] have been brilliant. Every single one I’ve been to has been outstanding and of all the things that has increased my confidence. It has been the workshops that have given me so many practical ideas. ... It’s been fantastic – I think next year they should run them more, and they should have one like during the day.  (Cohort 2)
They particularly valued both having input from people who had current experience in the sorts of schools that they themselves would be teaching in, and the input from the Teach for America participants. The latter had been more effectively selected in the second year of the programme to provide workshops relevant to the participants’ needs, and they made a very strong contribution.

Professional studies attracted much more mixed comments. Some aspects were seen as useful, particularly the more practical sessions (e.g. behaviour management, assessment). Critical comments suggested that the pace was too slow or that there should have been a greater emphasis on practicalities. In both cohorts, many participants commented that they felt it would have been better to have less of what they refer to as ‘theory’, and more practical advice and information to enable them to survive. This was reported in the Staff Participant Liaison Committee during the Summer Institute, as well as in interviews and surveys conducted several months later.

Many studies of initial teacher training have commented on the relative value that trainee teachers place on ‘practical’ and ‘theoretical’ elements of their courses. There is no clear agreement about this. Some studies suggest that students see theory as an essential component (e.g. Holligan, 1997; Williams and Soare, 2000). Others report that ‘some student teachers remain unconvinced about the utility of the theoretical components of their training courses’ (Hobson, 2003: 246); that trainees ‘appreciate most those elements of their courses that deal with day-to-day practicalities of teaching rather than the principles that underpin them’ (Asher and Malet, 1999: 80); or that trainees want courses that will provide them with ‘a manual for survival in the classroom’ (Foster, 1999).

For Teach First trainees, ‘a manual for survival in the classroom’ such as Foster proposes is indeed a high priority, because they will be teaching substantial timetables from the start rather than having the more gentle introduction which is possible on most other ITT courses.

- But essentially we’ve been given six weeks to train to be a teacher and there just seems to be a lot of emphasis on theory, which I’m not trying to say is not important. … Some of the sessions have been interesting, and we do need to talk about issues, but sometimes we go into them far too much and you don’t feel you ever achieve anything and we talk about differentiation quite a lot and it’s kind of, well how do we differentiate? It’s something you have to do in the school, but it’s okay that’s really good to know, but tell me, how do I differentiate? How do I prepare a work sheet for someone who can’t speak any English? And there is that practical side which I felt is lacking, and I mean it’s interesting having the talks and that, but it’s how I’m going to practically deal with that in September because they know I’m going to face it. (Cohort 2)

- The Summer Institute was far too theoretical. The subject studies workshops had no relevance to my teaching. More lesson planning for specific attainment levels needed. There was too little interaction with pupils and too little teaching experience. (Cohort 2)

Furthermore, some Teach First participants argue that they do not need ‘theory’ because they are only going to be teachers for two years, and so they do not need the wider perspective that is developed by those training for a career in teaching.

Hobson and Malderez (2005), in their longitudinal study Becoming a Teacher, were able to explore the views of trainees on different training routes and of differing ages and backgrounds. They found that the trainees who placed the highest value on ‘theory’ were the people who had had more experience in schools as adults prior to
their training. This would suggest that Teach First trainees, who have in general had very limited experience in school as adults, would be more likely than other trainees to see little value in ‘theory’.

Hobson and Malderez also found that those who had had more experience in school during their training were more likely to recognise the value of ‘theory’. Our findings from the evaluation of Teach First support this. While in the early stages, the trainees see little value in ‘theory’ simply because they feel they need ‘a manual for survival’ (Foster, 1999), at a later stage, when they have had substantial experience, many of them begin to look for and appreciate theoretical insights. A participant in the NQT year commented:

[Theory is] more relevant when you know what you’ve been doing for a bit, because your first few weeks in the classroom is more, how am I going to teach these classes, how am I going to teach this stuff. You’re not thinking about [theory], you’re not thinking about it, you don’t care, you don’t really think about it until at least half-term I don’t think. (Cohort 2)

In the most recent Cohort 2 interviews, conducted at the start of the NQT year, one participant suggested that teacher training should be a longer process so that teachers would have the chance to reflect more on their experience. Three of the 22 Cohort 2 participants interviewed spoke about actively seeking out material to provide some theoretical background.

I don’t feel I have been trained enough in that [theory] so far. Inevitably because of what the scheme is … I still think it might be nice to go out of teaching for a couple of years and then come back in. Partly because you have no time to reflect here and it would be nice to have the space to think about it all properly. I thought about doing an MA in psychology or something, something that might be directly useful, but I don’t want to be gone for long. (Cohort 2)

Similarly a Cohort 1 participant at the end of her NQT year said:

I reached a point in about January where I just went and bought some books and read them. I felt like I wanted to know what other people think about it and how it has been done before and about theory and child psychology and stuff. It was good and it made sense and it wasn’t all that surprising what people had written. … I think Teach First could very valuably run sort of higher level teaching classes during the second year and third year and keep you going that way. (Cohort 1)

This issue is clearly one that extends far beyond Teach First, but is exacerbated in this context because the nature of the programme increases the initial anxiety about survival. While a minority did acknowledge the value of the ‘theoretical’ aspects of the Summer Institute, our data suggests that they might be more appreciative of it at a later stage in the programme when their initial anxiety about survival had faded.

Overall, most participants felt that they were reasonably well-prepared to start work in school by the end of the Summer Institute, particularly in the second year when they had also benefited from meeting up with Cohort 1 (who spent three days in Canterbury completing their assessment); those embarking on the programme found it very helpful having structured and less formal opportunities to meet the more experienced group.

It was clear that the activities designed to build an esprit de corps had been successful in achieving this aim. Tutors talked of a buzz, and participants commented on the ‘morale-boosting atmosphere’ and ‘environment of innovation’. One participant commented:
I think personally they’ve instilled confidence in us I think very, very well. And there have been moments when I thought well it’s actually sort of been a bit glib. I’m not sure, I think actually I do believe them that I do think we’re all capable of doing it, which is very important when you go into your London school and you realise just what you’re up against. Your kind of stomach drops away and you wonder what you’ve let yourself in for. So I think that has been really, really excellent. (Cohort 2)

Participants realised there was a great deal they did not know, but felt that they needed to start teaching at this point:

I feel like I just want to go into the school now and start teaching, and the Summer Institute has pushed me into the stage where I just think, right I can’t learn any more unless I’m actually teaching whilst I’m doing it. So I suppose that’s a good stage to be at. (Cohort 2)

They also felt that they knew what sort of teachers they were aiming to become:

I’ve come out with an idea of what a great teacher is and just that kind of model of what a great teacher is, so even though I probably won’t be that at the beginning, we haven’t necessarily been taught – we haven’t actually been made that yet, we’ve been taught what that is. So that like when we’re in the classroom we will be able to adapt and hopefully become more and more like that goal, the ideal teacher. (Cohort 2)

Many praised the high quality of the CCCUC input and tutors, and the very wide coverage that was achieved in a short time.

Teach First staff also felt that participants were well-prepared, and that many sessions had been outstanding. Similarly tutors generally felt that preparation was good. All those involved commented that the timing is problematic in that neither of the weeks in school offered participants the opportunity to observe regular teaching; however, this is an inevitable consequence of holding the Institute in July.

Some school staff felt that participants were well-prepared at the Summer Institute, which one headteacher described as a ‘very focused and realistic preparation for entering teaching’. A few argued that the participants could not have been prepared because they had had so little training. Some said that they did not have enough information about the training to be able to comment, and that they would welcome more information.

Some commented on specific lacks, particularly in relation to some aspects of training to teach specific subjects, and in relation to lesson planning; this comment was repeated even in the second year when there had been a greater emphasis on lesson planning during the six weeks. Some argued that participants’ expectations were set at too high a level:

They were very raw in terms of what to expect from the students, and managing behaviour and not taking it personally, and not feeling personally wounded when students don’t behave. And then, producing a lot, a lot of work and then not getting through. You know it can be really soul-destroying. (Professional mentor)

The tendency was for school staff to compare the preparation with other forms of initial teacher training: having the Summer Institute meant that Teach First trainees were better prepared than those on the GTP, but in comparison with PGCE students they were ‘thrown in at the deep end’.

While we did not collect data at the third Summer Institute, we did interview CCCUC staff to find out about developments. The overall impression was that things have gone very smoothly, partly because all the Cohort 3 participants had been placed in
schools before the start of the Institute. A significant development was the contribution of about a dozen Cohort 1 participants; having completed two years of teaching they are now in a position to advise the next cohort. Another change has been that the professional tutors who work with the participants in schools have played a greater role in planning and delivering professional studies; it was hoped that this would make its relevance more evident. However, in interview some of these tutors expressed reluctance to undertake this, because they felt that it added considerably to their workload.

3.4.3 Summary: the initial training

- Both Summer Institutes have had a very positive and dynamic atmosphere.
- A strong *esprit de corps* was created, encouraging the participants to identify with Teach First, and to see themselves as special and important. This was effective in boosting confidence to start teaching in challenging schools.
- The timing of the Summer Institute is inevitably difficult: at that time of year they are unable to spend quality time in schools, and as a result some have no opportunity to undertake classroom observation or to teach.
- The input most valued by participants was practical information and advice about how to cope in school.
- Many participants, like other trainee teachers, had reservations about what they described as theory. Previous research suggests that their views may be partly a consequence of their very limited experience in schools at that point in time. In addition it is related to the need to be able to teach a considerable timetable right from their first day in school.

The Summer Institute can be seen as good practice on an employment-based route, in that it provides an opportunity to equip participants with essential survival information. It also serves to build *esprit de corps*, which, as we will show in subsequent sections, develops into a very effective support structure. The use of practising teachers to run workshops has been an extremely successful and inspiring aspect of the Summer Institute. The consistent emphasis on high expectations in all aspects of the Summer Institute is in line with the Standards for QTS, and also provides participants with strategies that could help them to make a difference in challenging schools.
3.5 The school placement

3.5.1 The nature of the agreement with schools

Teach First is an employment-based route into teaching; the schools are therefore the
employers. The trainees are expected to undertake the same teaching load as an NQT;
they are not additional to the school’s complement of staff. This contrasts with the
GTP, on which schools receive a £13,000 grant towards the cost of the trainee’s
salary, and as a result the trainee is generally additional to the full staff complement,
and is not expected to teach a full timetable in the first instance.

On the Teach First programme, schools pay a recruitment fee to Teach First for each
participant placed in the school. In the first year, this was a one-off initial payment of
£500, followed by termly payments totalling £3000 over the two years. These figures
have increased in subsequent years. The schools receive funding from the DfES to
cover the cost of mentoring their Teach First trainees (this was £2000 per trainee in
the first year), but do not receive any grant towards the cost of their salaries.

Teach First undertakes the placement process, receiving requests from schools, and
allocating trainees on the basis of their subject specialisms. The participants indicate
their preferences e.g. for religious schools, or for particular areas of London, but there
is no guarantee that these will be taken into account.

The schools request trainees in particular subjects. They are expected to take at least
four in total (though these can be spread over two cohorts). The CVs of the trainees
allocated are sent to the school, at which point they can turn down anybody
unsuitable. This happens, for example, when the subject match is not sufficiently
close (i.e. a school wanting a physics teacher rather than a biologist). However, the
schools do not have the opportunity to interview the trainees before they start work.
During the year schools are expected to release the trainees for one day each half term
to attend subject training; for a period spent in a second school (in the first year this
was two weeks or equivalent, but in the second year it was reduced to five days); and
for one further day which is spent in a primary school.

The school provides a professional mentor, who has an overview of the programme
for all the Teach First trainees, and provides a programme of generic professional
training. This has in most cases been the programme organised for NQTs in the
school. In addition, the school provides a subject mentor for each trainee, who meets
them on a weekly basis. Additional support for trainees is provided by a professional
tutor from the training provider, who visits every two weeks. Professional and subject
mentors and the professional tutor undertake regular lesson observations.

The schools’ views are represented through regular (half-termly) meetings of the
Teach First London Schools Advisory Group (LSAG). Any school with Teach First
trainees is welcome to send a representative to this (usually either the headteacher or
the professional mentor). Staff from Teach First and CCCUC also attend. Minutes of
meetings are sent to all schools in the programme.

In the first year of the programme it became apparent that there were many disparities
in the amount of support provided and the timetable allocated to Teach First trainees.
In response to this, the London Schools Advisory Group drew up a document ‘Key
Requirements for school placements’, which spelled out in detail the agreement about
what schools should provide. This includes requirements that all staff should have
been informed about the programme and that relevant staff should have copies of the Standards; requirements in relation to timetabling and support; and requirements in relation to both the Standards (e.g. working with Teaching Assistants, teaching in KS3 and KS4) and the specific demands of the programme (e.g. employing at least four participants; receiving them in London Schools week; paying them at the specified level).

This document has been further refined for the third cohort, following agreement reached at the LSAG meeting in March. It is now specified that trainees should not teach more than two subjects, and that they should not provide cover lessons or act as form tutors without the direction of a qualified teacher.

However, despite the clarity of the documentation, some schools have not followed all the requirements, as we illustrate in this section.

3.5.2 Challenging London schools
The schools in the Teach First programme have been selected as challenging on the basis of the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals: this should be more than 30%. In the first year the DfES encouraged Teach First to place participants in schools where less than 25% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs. Currently those schools within families 14-27 of the London Challenge Families of Schools are eligible. Schools should be able to show that they can provide the necessary support for participants.

In the first year it was not easy to find schools that met the full criteria and wanted to take part in the programme. Of the 44 schools involved in the programme that year, a quarter had less than 30% free school meals eligibility. Some also had very good GCSE results (nine of the schools had achieved more than the then national average figure of 52% of pupils with 5 A-C* GCSEs). While we have been told that the criteria have been more strictly applied in subsequent years, some of the original schools which do not meet the criteria for free school meals or London Challenge Families of Schools are strong supporters of the programme, and are still involved.

For the majority of the participants, teaching in challenging schools and making a contribution to education in areas of disadvantage were key attractions of the programme. This was the case for a higher percentage of women and of those teaching arts subjects. Thus the participants wanted and expected their schools to be challenging. However, there was obviously a balance to be struck between too little and too much challenge.

Some of the Cohort 1 participants in particular schools expressed disappointment that their schools were not challenging enough and they did not feel they were contributing. Indeed, some suggested that pupils were suffering from being taught by them. A few teachers in this group of schools were reported as explicitly telling trainees that they were letting down the pupils and the department; this was significant among the factors leading to one withdrawal from the programme. In such cases some trainees felt that they had been ‘mis-sold’ the programme. However, participant interviews at the end of the training year indicated that in general these feelings had moderated, and some of these participants said that they valued being in schools that were effectively managed and where they felt that they were getting excellent models of teaching.
Other participants have been placed in schools or departments that might be considered too challenging. A distinction can be drawn here between the challenge presented by the pupils and the challenge presented by poor school or department leadership; the former is seen as a reasonable challenge, but the latter creates a serious shortfall in support. Several of the participants who have withdrawn have reported that a major factor in their decision has been the lack of support structures in the school, and in particular the lack of clear policies and practices in relation to discipline.

However, it should be noted that it is very difficult to generalise about a school; one department may provide a supportive and welcoming environment for a Teach First participant even in a school that has weak leadership overall, while another department may be totally unsuitable:

*My dissatisfaction with support is as a result of the disorganisation of my department.*
(Cohort 1)

Our data include many clear examples like this. One particular problem is that in some schools the headteacher has not ‘sold’ the programme to all the staff involved, with the result that respondents report that they lack support:

*The scheme [Teach First] is imposed on my department. My department, including my mentor, is not convinced that the scheme is a good idea.*
(Cohort 2)

The Key Requirements specify that headteachers should ‘ensure participants are appointed only to those departments in the school that are able to support a teacher in training’, but this is an area where it is difficult for a provider to ensure quality.

However, lack of leadership in a department is not necessarily an indication that this would be an inappropriate placement; several schools have provided support in other ways: for example, using an Advanced Skills Teacher from another school to mentor the Teach First trainees. And in some cases, trainees have thrived in placements where they have had little or no support from subject mentors.

In 2004, following discussions with Ofsted and the TTA, ten participants were placed in schools in special measures. This has had mixed success. Four withdrew from the programme, while two others described their schools as unsuitable environments for training teachers. One commented:

*My experience of Teach First has been largely negative, I had very little support, Teach First staff (not CCCUC) did not seem at all interested in my difficulties. I was placed in a school on special measures which was an almost traumatic experience. I strongly wanted to be a teacher but now I don’t.*
(Cohort 2)

The remaining four all reported that they were happy. The intention is that in future participants should not be placed in schools in special measures; however, an obvious risk of using challenging schools is that they may go into special measures during the course of the programme.

School respondents noted that those recruited to the programme generally have very limited or no previous experience of challenging urban schools, and despite the preparation offered at the Summer Institute, many talked of the trainees receiving a ‘culture shock’ when they first arrived in school.

Participants’ questionnaire responses relating to their schools suggested that many of them had not realised how great the challenge would be in relation to pupil attainment levels and the quality of resources, and that they had underestimated the quality of the
work of the existing staff in these schools, both in relation to quality of teaching and quality of pastoral care. Section 3.1.2 pointed out that one of the key attractions of the programme is the opportunity to make a difference in areas of disadvantage. It appeared that this message had been taken by some participants to imply that the level of teaching in these challenging schools was so poor that even an unqualified teacher would be able to improve on what had been in place. In the first year a few (more naïve) participants saw it as their role to inform school staff about how to improve. This was not well received. In the second year there were much greater efforts to avoid giving any message that might imply that existing staff were weak, and to spell out more carefully how participants could make a difference (for example, through hard work, professionalism, and having high expectations).

3.5.3 The process of placement

In the first year of the programme, the process of placing trainees in schools was undertaken very late. This was mainly because the programme was new, and all the arrangements had to be made in a short space of time. At that time, schools had greater difficulties in obtaining staff, and they generally saw taking a Teach First trainee as a positive alternative to having classes taught by a succession of supply teachers. By the second year, despite Teach First’s efforts, about one in six of the trainees remained unplaced at the start of the Summer Institute. This was a more serious problem than in the previous year, because in revising the six-week programme, greater emphasis had been given to preparing the participants to teach in specific schools, including organising the professional studies programme in school groups taught by the tutor who would then visit the trainees in school, and using the schools’ schemes of work as a basis for lesson planning.

However, by this time teacher shortage was less acute, and some schools were unwilling to commit themselves to the programme until they found out which staff were leaving and what qualified staff were available. In addition some schools expressed considerable disappointment about Teach First’s administrative inefficiencies (e.g. not receiving acknowledgement that their requests had been received; not responding to telephone messages; apparent inefficiencies in recording what they had requested, and consequently being offered trainees in the wrong subjects). As a result of this, some schools that would have taken on Teach First trainees employed other teachers instead.

While the majority of the participants were eventually placed, it proved impossible to find places for two individuals who were eventually placed as GTP trainees (i.e. additional to the school’s staffing complement). They had much lower timetables than other Teach First trainees, and did not feel that they were needed, or were able to make a contribution. Moreover, they faced the likelihood of having to move to another school at the end of their first year.

The placement problem was particularly acute in Modern Foreign Languages and Citizenship. While shortages are experienced in MFL nationally, pupils in the challenging schools that Teach First trainees are placed in may be more likely than others to drop MFL in Key Stage 4. Thus these schools are apparently not experiencing a teacher shortage in MFL. In relation to Citizenship, the pattern of delivery of this subject has not yet settled down, but it seems that many of the challenging London schools are not actually delivering it as a distinct subject, and thus do not ‘need’ citizenship teachers. We have heard of placement negotiations which have involved bargaining along the lines of ‘we will only allocate you a
scientist if you also take a citizenship teacher’. In the first year of the programme, several participants were eventually placed to teach subjects other than those for which they had been accepted on the programme. This also happened in the second year, but in fewer cases.

In order to avoid such problems with placement in future years, Teach First have reached agreement with LSAG about deadline dates by which schools should request trainees. They also reviewed the procedures, and employed a very experienced ex-headteacher (who already worked for CCCUC as the coordinator for professional tutors visiting schools) to coordinate the process. This proved effective, and the third cohort were all placed before the start of the Summer Institute.

The schools interviewed in 2004-5 indicated that the staffing situation was generally improving: one headteacher described turnover as ‘minimal’, and it was reported to be easier to find qualified staff to fill vacancies than it had been over the last few years. These improvements in the overall staffing position were specifically linked by headteachers to increased pay in London, though general improvements in teacher supply may also have had an impact. This was not a uniform picture: some subjects still prove particularly difficult – ICT and Design Technology were the main ones cited – and some schools reported particular difficulties in recruitment.

In this situation of improved teacher supply, Teach First must present itself as an effective supplier of high quality staff. Rather than appealing to schools because they are unable to get other staff, Teach First needs to position itself to become a positive choice on the part of schools. There is evidence that it is doing this; in 2004, several schools reported that they had requested Teach First trainees rather than advertising for qualified teachers, and the success of the 2005 placements may indicate that this approach is now more widespread. In terms of quality, it has achieved a good reputation; the schools we interviewed that were taking Teach First trainees for the first time in 2004 all referred to reports of the high quality of those in other schools.

Some schools have expressed concern that, while they are sent the CVs of those who may be placed in the school, they are not offered an opportunity to interview them. One head thought it ‘extraordinary’ that schools need to ‘sign up and pay Teach First’ before they get to see any CVs, and could not understand why he could not meet the trainees before they were appointed. Schools would not take on other teachers without interview, and some believed that if they had been able to interview their Teach First trainees, some inappropriate placements could have been avoided. It is unlikely, however, that this would be routinely possible, given the timescale and the complexity of the process. A few schools have nevertheless treated the first visit as an interview, and have selected which trainees they wish to take on. Others wished they had done so because they expressed concern that the participants they had been allocated seemed unlikely to cope in that particular school context (though might be successful in a different school). However, the concern expressed did not always reflect any dissatisfaction with Teach First’s selection procedures, or the participants allocated, but was rather an assertion of their preference for selecting their own staff.

In interview some school staff expressed concern that after they had agreed to take specific participants, they were asked to change and take others, who in some cases were less suited to their needs. In one school, staff told us that they had requested two Teach First trainees but had been allocated three, and had been given the impression that they ‘had’ to accept all of them. Although the reasoning behind the requirement to take four participants was understood, it was described as ‘inflexible and not
meeting the needs of schools’. While there is an overall agreement to place participants in groups of four, in many cases this has been achieved by counting the total Teach First participants in the school, rather than those from a single cohort. In other cases, the target of four has not been achieved, and schools have had only two or three. When the schools have to pay the teachers’ salary, it is perhaps unreasonable to press them to take extra participants, however, desirable it is from the participants’ perspective to be placed with others.

Apart from lateness of placement, participants’ main concerns have been about the location of the schools they are placed in. Many participants had expected to be placed in an ‘inner city’ school, which they expected to be in inner London. However, many of the most challenging schools are located on the fringes of London, just inside the M25. Some participants had already arranged accommodation, and so many of them have been undertaking very long journeys, commuting for up to three hours a day. The Teach First website states explicitly that ‘our schools are located all over Greater London’, but it remains to be seen whether this is sufficient to manage participant expectations.

Participants also felt that their needs and wishes in relation to placement were not generally taken into account, in relation, for example, to the ethnic mix or religious character of the school they would work in. However, again this may be an issue of managing expectations. Our understanding is that this was more successfully achieved in 2005, but that participants were still disappointed that when they had specified, for example, north London, the school was so far out.

At the end of the first year we asked participants to indicate how satisfied they were with their placement schools. Over three-quarters were satisfied or very satisfied, and 7% were dissatisfied. However, it should be noted that 11% (20) of those who started work in schools the previous September had withdrawn during the year or intended not to continue in the following September, and so did not complete the questionnaire. Withdrawal interviews and previous questionnaires indicate that most of these participants would have indicated that they were dissatisfied.

A number of participants have asked at some point in the training year to be moved to another school because they are unhappy, and feel unsupported. If this option were made available, more might stay for the whole two years, but the schools would feel very badly let down. Moreover, moving one person might lead to other requests to be relocated. However, not moving trainees is in some cases likely to lead to them withdrawing from the programme. In Cohort 1, 14% of the participants responding to the July 04 questionnaire (that is, excluding those who had withdrawn) said they had asked to move to another school. This was permitted only in a very small minority of cases, and the criteria for allowing some to move but not others were unclear; in one case a Cohort 2 participant was placed in the same department that a Cohort 1 participant had been removed from. Following this, Teach First set up clear guidelines setting out the circumstances in which such a move might be permitted. This would occur only if the school was ‘de-selected’ from the programme because it was deemed unsuitable for any Teach First participant; the school would have the right of appeal to a panel composed of members of the LSAG Committee and the Teach First Advisory Board.
3.5.4 Teaching load

The recommended teaching load for a Teach First trainee is equivalent to the timetable of an NQT. However, in the first year, some schools allocated very much more or less than this. Some (notably some of the Catholic schools) stated that they considered an 80% timetable was much too high, and as a matter of policy reduced this to 60%. They used the time freed up to enable the trainees to observe more lessons, an activity that they felt was not sufficiently catered for on the TF programme. In contrast some other trainees had timetables well above the recommended amount. At a meeting of school representatives to brief them about the second year it was apparent that this was an issue about which many headteachers felt very strongly, with some believing that an NQT timetable is unreasonable, and others believing that it would not be economic to offer a lower timetable. Whatever TF and CCCUC recommend as a fair timetable load, they cannot require schools to allocate particular timetables to teachers that they employ.

The Key Requirements document agreed by LSAG and issued to all schools with Cohort 2 trainees, included specific examples of what appropriate timetable loads would be (17 or 18 periods out of 25; 20 or 21 out of 30 etc.). These are based on the assumption that a full teaching load is 85%, and Teach First trainees should do 10% less (e.g. an NQT timetable). These examples work out at around 70% of a teaching week. But some tutors and Teach First staff have talked in interview of a reasonable expectation being to teach 80% of the total periods in a week, which would be rather higher than the recommendation. One headteacher who had allocated 23 periods out of 30 (=77%) to Cohort 2 participants was taken aback to be told by the tutor that this was too heavy a load.

Our survey asked participants how many lessons they were scheduled to teach, and how many there are in a full week. It showed that despite this agreement, some 15% of Cohort 2 participants reported that they had teaching timetables substantially above the recommended proportion of the week. However, the average timetable is lower than last year, and matches the limit (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proportion of a full timetable taught in the training year: comparison of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2.

An additional factor for Cohort 2 was that, now that teacher shortage is less acute, a number of schools took Teach First trainees to overstaff particular departments. This had the effect that some trainees were initially issued with timetables for the year that were largely (or in one case, entirely) made up of team teaching; this was later
adjusted following intervention by CCUC. While team-teaching is supportive, especially in the early part of the year, it is not in keeping with the ethos of the programme, or the desire of participants to make a contribution, for this to form a major part of the total timetable.

In addition to the variation in total hours of teaching, there were variations in the degree of challenge the timetable presents. Some had a large measure of repeat teaching to different sets, so that trainees could use the same plan and improve it during the week; others had no repeat teaching. It would be useful to monitor the effects of these differences.

3.5.5 Subjects taught
In addition to the issues around total hours of teaching, some timetables have proved problematic in the nature and spread of the subjects that some trainees were asked to teach.

In the first year some trainees were initially given timetables that did not meet the requirements for QTS: either because they did not include enough teaching in the main subject, or did not involve teaching the main subject in two adjacent Key Stages. The schools generally believed that their arrangements did meet the requirements in the Standards. However, the Standards do not specify exact proportions or lengths of time to be spent on the main subject. CCCUC’s interpretation was based on the amount of teaching a PGCE student would achieve during their training. Negotiation took place between CCCUC staff and schools during the first term to adjust these timetables. For the second cohort, clear guidance has been provided in the Key Requirements document.

There are a number of ways in which participants have found the subjects on their timetables problematic. In the first cohort, about 15% of the participants were training to teach subjects that were not the same as their degree subjects (e.g. a trainee with a joint degree in psychology and sociology, teaching geography). Interview data indicates that participants in this situation had to work harder, because they needed to revise, or at times develop, their subject knowledge to keep one step ahead of the pupils. The development of the subject knowledge audit has made this very much less likely to occur.

Many schools were keen to benefit from the subject knowledge of trainees whose degree was other than the subject they were teaching. Thus in Cohort 1, for example, some psychology graduates were timetabled to teach psychology as well as the subject they were training in (say, English). Some participants enjoyed having the opportunity to teach their degree subject, but where this made up a large proportion of the timetable, found that it occupied more of their energies than the subject in which they were being assessed for QTS.

Some schools also gave trainees timetables that included additional subjects of which they did not have adequate knowledge or experience: for example, a history graduate teaching RE in addition to history, or an English teacher teaching drama. In one case a participant whose highest qualification in a particular subject was GCSE was asked to teach GCSE classes in that subject. The problem here was that trainees were not supported in the less familiar subject because they were not part of the QTS process; mentors and tutor were focusing on the QTS subject. One effect of this has been that trainees in such situations found that they were spending more time and effort on the subject they knew little about than they did on their training subject. Another effect
was that some found themselves split between different departments in a school, and had no clear home base where they belonged and received support. In extreme cases trainees were given timetables with five or more different subjects. It appeared that a few schools saw Teach First trainees as people who could be used to fill gaps in the timetable. At worst, a timetable dominated by unfamiliar subjects has contributed to withdrawal from the programme.

The proportions both of participants teaching subjects other than their degree subject, and of participants teaching additional subjects, was higher among Cohort 1 than Cohort 2. In cases where the training subject is different from the degree subject, participants generally cope, partly because they have a range of support to enable them to do so. They reported that their limited subject knowledge increased the workload. However, some participants also argued that the subject research or revision that they had to do in such circumstances was enabling them to teach more effectively. Less than a third of Cohort 2 taught additional subjects, with a maximum of three subjects in addition to the training subject.

This issue has now been addressed in the Key Requirements for school placements. For 2005-6, these state that participants should teach no more than two subjects. However, there is no requirement that schools should provide support in the second subject.

3.5.6 Pastoral roles, cover lessons and extra-curricular activities

Our understanding was that trainees in their first year are not expected to take on the role of form tutor. We found that over a quarter of Cohort 2 were allocated this role in their first term, and others were shadowing the role, often with the expectation that they would take it on in the second or third term. While this was reported to add considerably to workload, it also contributed to increased job satisfaction.

Some trainees also reported that they were allocated regular cover lessons. While they were aware that this should not be part of their workload as trainees, they found it hard to refuse when they were trying to be accepted as members of staff, and to contribute in the school. One trainee was asked to provide cover as the first lesson she ever taught when she arrived in the school in September.

Both these issues have now been addressed through changes in the Key Requirements for school placements for 2005-6.

Teach First creates an expectation that participants will contribute to extra-curricular activities. Such involvement was a major way in which headteachers reported that Teach First teachers had made a difference during their first year. More than half of Cohort 2 participants were already involved in such activities when they completed the questionnaire in the November of their training year, and they reported this as a major source of job satisfaction. They also noted that involvement in extra-curricular activities had a considerable impact on teaching and learning, because they developed stronger relationships with pupils in the more informal setting, where teacher and pupils could see each other in a different light.

*There is one kid in particular who my relationship with him has just been utterly transformed by me going to cricket on a Tuesday and he’s seen me there, he’s seen me in a different light, he’s seen me laughing and joking instead of telling him off and now he’s sort of, he’s really pleasant to me, he’s really polite, he’s really engaged in my lessons which is great to see and it’s a really good tool for doing that I think.* (Cohort 2)
School staff also commented positively about the Teach First trainees’ involvement in pastoral and extra-curricular activities:

*I would say they are better than PGCE students … because a PGCE student would not get involved with form groups, would not get involved with school clubs, would not be expected to take school trips. They have done all this; they have made a big contribution to the life of the school.*

### 3.5.7 Total workload

The previous sections have shown the ways in which considerable disparities in workload arise. Timetables range from less than 50% to around 90% of the week. Some participants are teaching subjects with which they are not familiar. In addition, some have pastoral responsibilities, and more than half are involved in extra-curricular activities; these are the aspects of the work that participants report as providing a large part of their job satisfaction. They are also important aspects of the role of a teacher, and ones that are often largely omitted from the teacher training experience. In addition to working as teachers, trainees also have to compile portfolios of evidence for their QTS assessment.

Many have reported spending very long hours working. Some are perhaps over-diligent, spending a disproportionate amount of time on planning. Others, in the face of the huge workload, take short cuts to ensure survival. This gives rise to a concern, expressed by some school staff as well as by participants, that the work-life balance is not acceptable, and is indeed damaging to their performance and training as teachers.

While it may be appropriate to consider how other forms of teacher training might incorporate more pastoral and extra-curricular activities, it also seems important to find some way of reducing the unreasonable workload of the Teach First trainees. However, this is obviously not straightforward. Schools are paying Teach First trainees as unqualified teachers, and so expect them to teach a substantial timetable. It is difficult to see what could be cut out to make the workload more reasonable.

### 3.5.8 Position on pay scale

While Teach First made a recommendation about the point on the unqualified pay scale that should be used for trainees, the schools, as employers, were able to use their own judgement on this. Some decided to place the trainees higher than the recommendation, seeing this as part of their retention strategy. Other headteachers have felt that they have to abide by the figure set in the Key Requirements, but that this is unfair on participants who are ‘by far and away the worst paid teachers in the school’. This variation has led to perceptions of unfairness among the trainees, and some demands to headteachers for pay rises. A small minority of participants were promoted during their training year, taking on areas of responsibility in their schools. This created an additional workload, and tutors were concerned that this added pressure might jeopardise work towards QTS.

The Key Requirements now state that schools should ensure that participants are paid at point 3 on the unqualified pay scale in their training year, and the appropriate point on the qualified pay scale in their NQT year. Pay in the NQT year is discussed in Section 3.7.1.
3.5.9 Summary: the school placement

- Teach First participants are placed in schools where they work as unqualified teachers. While the DfES funds mentoring, they do not give schools a grant towards the salary, as they do on the GTP.

- Participants are allocated to schools. Some schools find this satisfactory, but others would like to be able to interview them, in some cases because they think this would prevent inappropriate placements, and in some cases simply because they believe that schools should select their own staff.

- The majority of schools used in the programme meet specific criteria relating to the degree of challenge. However, there is a considerable variation across the schools in this, with some presenting limited challenges, and some verging on being unsuitable for trainee teachers. Moreover, within a school one department can be much more difficult to work in than another.

- In the first two years of the programme there was considerable disparity in terms of timetable load, number of subjects taught, involvement in pastoral roles and cover lessons, and pay level. Requirements of schools in relation to all these issues have now been agreed with schools.

- Most Teach First trainees and teachers are involved in extra-curricular activities and many have pastoral roles. While this adds to their workload, they also find it has a very positive impact on their teaching and offers considerable job satisfaction.

While the total workload for Teach First participants is high, and in some cases excessive, the pastoral and extra-curricular activities were seen by participants as offering job satisfaction, and as having a positive impact on teaching and learning. There may be a case for considering whether such activities could be explicitly included in other forms of teacher training. The focus of working in challenging school circumstances is potentially of considerable interest to other providers. Teach First has shown that trainees can learn to teach in such schools provided an appropriate framework for support is provided, and can make a valuable contribution. This is explored further in the next section.
3.6 School-based teacher training

The roles of the professional and subject mentors and the professional tutor were outlined in Section 3.5.1. In addition to the on-going support, participants attend six subject training days (one each half term), and a short placement in a second school. The QTS assessment takes place at the end of the training year.

This section considers first the overall ratings given by participants to the various sources of support available, and then considers in greater detail the issues around each source of support. It also reviews the various aspects of training and the QTS assessment process.

3.6.1 Overall ratings for sources of support

Once they are working in school, trainees felt that the most important influence on their teaching was their current work in school. Simply teaching, and learning how to teach better through finding out what works, was seen as the most important influence by both cohorts. Feedback from colleagues and pupils and structured support were seen as less important.

Of the various sources of support available to trainees in their training year, the highest rating was given to other Teach First trainees in the school from the same cohort. Table 6 shows the ratings given by Cohort 2 in November and in the following July. These responses are very similar to those of Cohort 1 in the previous year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Support</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
<th>JULY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mean rating</td>
<td>% indicating very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 2 TF participants in your school</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort 1 TF participants in your school</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject training days</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject mentor in school</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other teaching staff in school</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach First participants in other schools</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional mentor in school</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your professional tutor</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / NQT induction programme</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemes of work and resources</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other sources rated as less effective than the above include books, journals and staff at Teach First

While most sources of support received similar ratings in November and in July, there were some changes in emphasis. Cohort 1 participants and the subject mentor were seen as offering less effective support later in the school year, while websites and the professional tutor were seen as more effective. These changes are statistically significant, and are very similar to the pattern that had been found in Cohort 1 responses.
There was considerable variation across schools. In July, 30% of the Cohort 2 participants did not consider their subject mentors to be either ‘very’ or ‘fairly effective’. It appeared that in the autumn term, subject mentors offered sufficient support to enable trainees to teach adequately, but that some did not prioritise supporting their trainees to progress further in the face of their own workload and responsibilities. This is borne out by qualitative data. In contrast, by July, participants had formed strong relationships with their professional tutors, who continued to encourage them to develop their teaching and who also had a good understanding of the assessment requirements.

Overall, Cohort 2 participants rated their support as significantly better in the schools already established in the programme. However, a small number of these received low ratings; these were all schools where the quality of support had been an issue for participants in the previous year. This raises the question of whether these schools should have been used again.

3.6.2 The Training Handbook and Journal

CCCUC have provided a detailed Training Programme Handbook, with specific guidance on how schools should support trainees. They have also provided a Journal which acts as focus for weekly meetings between trainees and subject mentors, and provides space for recording achievements, issues, targets and reflections, as well as the progress of the school-based professional development programme. If properly used the Journal can provide much of the evidence that Standards have been met. The Journal was developed from the one already in use on the CCCUC PGCE.

In the first year the Training Programme Handbook and the Journal were not issued until the trainees had already started work in school. This was a consequence of the accelerated start-up of the programme (with planning by CCCUC only possible from the previous February), but unfortunately resulted in them not being used effectively in some schools. In the second year the documents were issued to trainees at the Summer Institute, when they were expected to start using the Journal. They were also sent to schools before trainees arrived (though in a number of cases they had not reached the subject mentors who needed to use them).

The documentation was regarded by schools as fairly easy to understand, and covering ‘just about every eventuality’. Some argued that it needed to be more flexible to enable mentors to respond to individual needs. Many school respondents commented that the Handbook was too long, with one mentor likening it to a ‘London telephone directory’. Some mentors had not read it because of its length, and instead used shorter guides from other ITT providers.

Participants commented that the Journal had proved a helpful way of focusing their reflections:

The journal, if it’s properly done, is very important practice and I think it’s something that needs to be pushed … [through] the reflection you can identify your strengths and weaknesses and go from there.

School feedback was also positive, and responses to the school questionnaire identified the Journal as one aspect of the Teach First programme that might inform other forms of teacher training. One subject mentor commented:

What it does is make people who are on the course reflect about lessons all the time in a lot of depth and I actually like that because I think it is more important actually than qualifications or anything.
However, some mentors felt it was excessively time-consuming, and some participants saw it as too ‘formalised’.

### 3.6.3 Support provided by the schools

Participants in both cohorts have received very variable support from staff in their placement schools. The greatest variability related to subject mentors. At best, trainees experienced regular weekly meetings, an on-going professional dialogue on a daily basis, and constructive feedback on lessons observed. In some cases the mentors devised requirements of their mentees beyond what was specified: for example, linking the journal to building up evidence in the portfolio, or to research tasks inspired by the weekly reflections. Other trainees said that they and their mentors ‘wandered in and out of each other’s lessons’ and ‘talked all the time’.

In contrast, a small number of participants had very little, if any, support from subject mentors: at the end of their training year 15% of Cohort 2 participants indicated that their subject mentors were ‘not effective’ and a further 16% rated them only slightly effective. This is a rather higher proportion than reported by the case study trainees in the *Becoming a Teacher* research (Hobson and Malderez, 2005); only 15% identified limitations in relation to support from their mentors. This suggests that the challenging schools used in the Teach First programme find it more difficult than others to provide adequate mentoring for trainees.

In some cases the lack of support occurred because the person allocated as subject mentor did not want to do the job, or had not received a timetable allocation to do it, or was simply too busy. In some cases participants reported that they would get help if they asked for it, but they did not like to do so. Other participants reported that they did not have subject mentors because there were no experienced staff teaching that subject. Some schools made arrangements for support from outside the school, with varying degrees of success. A particular problem was experienced by those teaching more than one subject; the mentor in such cases could not offer support in the non-QTS subjects, and other staff had not been allocated timetabled allowances for mentoring.

Some Cohort 1 participants were asked to act as subject mentors for Cohort 2 participants while they themselves were still in their NQT year. One reported feeling very uneasy about undertaking this role, because she felt that her experience was still very limited, and she was not in a position to provide the sort of support that she felt should be offered. But she was the most experienced teacher in her department, and was at that time acting as head of department as well as supporting another NQT.

In summer 2005, CCCUC staff reported that the possibility of invoking financial penalties for schools that did not provide subject mentors was being considered. This would be reasonable, in that the DfES allocates a grant to schools to cover the cost of releasing teachers to act as mentors.

Professional mentors were generally provided, and most participants attended weekly or fortnightly group sessions (generally put on as part of the NQT or induction programme). CCCUC have circulated some examples of effective programmes. Again, there was variability; some schools had no such programme. Professional mentors are also expected to undertake some observations of trainees, and in a minority of cases this was not happening. At least one professional mentor was also acting as a subject mentor; this did not work well as it gave the participant only one
perspective, and, as the mentor was also part of the school leadership team, and was very busy, the participant received very limited support.

Achieving consistency in support is something that CCCUC and TF have tried to address through the Key Requirements for schools, where expectations of professional and subject mentors are clearly spelled out, and new mentors are required to attend mentor training. Some training has been provided on school premises for those unable to attend the sessions.

Nevertheless, at the end of their training year, 40% of Cohort 2 participants indicated that their subject mentor had not carried out the role as set out in the handbook, and 20% felt that their professional mentor had not done so. More than 30% indicated that key staff in their schools did not have a clear understanding of the Teach First programme requirements. It was evident that within a school there could be variation in this: one subject mentor might be carrying out the role effectively while another did not. However, there were a few schools where all the participants indicated that the requirements were not understood and mentors were not carrying out their roles. Those participants in schools new to the programme were more likely than those in schools that had had Cohort 1 participants to report limitations in relation to understanding, or appropriate carrying out, of mentor roles. Thus it appeared that a clearer understanding of the programme was gradually being developed in schools. However, a few schools had employed Teach First participants for two years, and were still reported to be providing limited support.

School interviewees generally asserted that they were devoting a great deal of time to supporting Teach First trainees, and in many cases far more hours than they were allocated. This was particularly the case in the first term:

*I had to plan every lesson with her, check what resources she had, look at the lesson plans and say to her, OK that’s fine, you need this, you need that. … We would talk every day. I have one period of the week set aside for us. But even with that, every morning we’d be talking, and at lunchtime we’d be talking and at the end of the day we’d be talking so it took all my time.* (Subject mentor)

When schools had weak trainees, there was considerable concern about the impact not just on the mentor, but on the department as a whole. However, many subject mentors said that their role was easier because the Teach First trainees are generally ‘bright and clued in quickly’, and ‘catch on quickly to what they have to do’:

*It’s a lot less workload working with somebody who is sharp and can use their own initiative and, you know, is bright and willing to work hard.* (Subject mentor)

In the schools we visited, generally one mentor had been sent to attend the mentor training. Experienced mentors usually opted out. Reactions to the training were very mixed. One professional mentor described the training as ‘highly professional, very organised’, and said that CCCUC staff were ‘very good communicators’. Learning how to evaluate had been particularly useful. Others complained that the sessions merely repeated the documentation they had already read.

### 3.6.4 Support in school from the ITT provider

The majority of the professional tutors were recruited by CCCUC specifically to take on this role, and had previously worked in urban schools. The role of the professional tutor is to support all the trainees in the school regardless of subject. This generic role differs from the pattern common on PGCE courses, where the subject tutor makes the school visits. Some tutors commented that it could be difficult to give appropriate
support to trainees in subjects they were not familiar with. In some cases subject mentors and trainees also felt it would be useful to have more regular contact with a subject specialist. However, it was agreed that the wide geographical area made this impossible. In the second year CCCUC did make some arrangements to offer subject support where it was particularly needed: for example, when support from a subject mentor was lacking.

Professional tutors visit each school once a fortnight, though some individual trainees reported meeting with them less frequently, because the tutor did not necessarily meet every trainee on every visit. A concern raised by trainees and professional mentors has been that some participants in schools with large numbers of Teach First trainees received less support than those in schools with fewer trainees, because some tutors allocate the same amount of time to each school regardless of trainee numbers. This has been addressed by CCCUC.

Where support within the school was good, some trainees felt that the professional tutor visits were not needed, and indeed in some cases created greater confusion, though others commented that the outside perspective was valuable. However, in cases where support in school was not adequate, the professional tutor role was seen as vital.

Trainees raised some concerns about lack of continuity of tutor: some said they would have liked to have the same professional tutor during the Summer Institute and in school; others expressed concerns about changes of tutor during the training year. Both these concerns were based on the time that it takes to build an effective relationship with a new tutor. Greater consistency of tutor was achieved for the second cohort, and all participants had an opportunity to meet their tutor during the Summer Institute, but not necessarily to work with that person. The higher ratings given towards the end of the year for tutor support by each cohort may in part be an indication of the importance of having established an effective personal relationship. Tutors similarly emphasised the importance of continuity to enable constructive working relationships to develop.

There has been considerable turnover in the team of professional tutors since the programme began. One reason for this is that the role has drawbacks, including a large amount of travel across London, and being available by email for trainees at any time. This can be very time-consuming. Tutor training days have been arranged to induct new tutors and to share effective practices, and peer observation has been arranged. However, even in the second year when a more extended induction was arranged, some of the newer tutors found the induction provision rather limited, and would have welcomed earlier opportunities to observe more experienced colleagues in action and to share good practice.

A key aspect of the professional tutor role is to ensure effective communication with the school. Tutors reported that they were generally able to maintain effective contact with the professional mentor in school, and professional mentors also described this contact as valuable, and working well. However, the tutors found it was much harder to maintain effective contact with the subject mentors, partly because they tend to have heavier teaching timetables. Similarly, some subject mentors complained that the professional tutors were not communicating with them effectively. Clearly the trainee benefits when communication channels work well.
Over 90% of the trainees felt that their professional tutor carried out the role set out in the handbook; this contrasts with the responses related to school subject mentors (60%) and professional mentors (70%) reported above. Some participants spoke very highly of their tutors. Schools also valued the regular tutor visits, by the end of the year most felt they had developed a good professional working relationship, and considered the support provided to be excellent. They welcomed the different perspective, and valued the tutors bringing in new ideas. Some felt it would be helpful to have some visits from subject tutors rather than professional tutors, as the professional tutors were not necessarily aware of subject-specific issues. Teach First, who had initially expressed concern about the quality of tutors, have indicated that they are now more confident about this. The Chief Executive felt that all tutors should be ‘inspirational’.

3.6.5 Support from other Teach First participants

The original aspiration was to place participants in groups of four, so that they would benefit from mutual support. Almost all participants are placed with at least one other, and in many cases there are more than four in a school. Many trainees commented on the crucial importance of peer group support. Some also commented that being in a group supported them in maintaining the Teach First ethos:

Last year we tried to meet as a five on a sort of semi-regular basis to try and think about ways we could improve the school, or give each other support in any projects we had, because we felt we were here to do a little bit more than just teach, and that the Teach First ethos and the Teach First idea is to go in and change things. (Cohort 2)

While placing participants in groups is intended to enable them to maintain a group ethos and to support each other, this has not always worked well, often because of the layout of the school and the practice of having Faculty or Department offices, rather than using a central staff room. Several participants reported that they hardly ever saw others in the same school, and felt very isolated.

Tutors commented that where there are a number of trainees teaching the same subject in a school, this can be a disadvantage, as they often do not have adequate role models and experienced teachers to support them within that department. Similarly where there are large numbers of participants in a school, they tend to be less well integrated with other staff. One head saw this as desirable; she preferred the Teach First group to remain separate and not get ‘sucked into’ the current school culture. Four schools have taken on seven or eight participants each year. This raises issues about the overall proportion of the staff who will be very inexperienced.

Cohort 2 participants who are in schools with Cohort 1 participants report that they are a key source of support, as are other participants in the same cohort. It was noticeable, however, that the ratings given by Cohort 2 trainees for support from Cohort 1 trainees in the same schools were significantly lower in July than in November. It seemed that they were very welcoming to the new cohort when they arrived, but that this was not always maintained through the year. A small number of Cohort 2 reported feeling very disappointed that some Cohort 1 participants were unsupportive.

While there is an overall aspiration to place participants in groups, and indeed, a requirement on schools to take at least four participants at a time, this does not always happen. A very small number of individuals have found themselves to be the only participant in a school (in some cases because others have withdrawn from the
programme). This was raised as a concern by some of these participants. There is obviously a real tension between the aspiration to ensure that a group of participants are placed together, and the staffing requirements of schools, where only one teacher may be needed.

### 3.6.6 Support across the programme

The different elements of the support network are an important feature of Teach First. The combined effect of being very new teachers with a heavy workload in challenging schools has meant that all participants have experienced extreme highs and lows during their training year. We asked Cohort 1 participants about the lowest moment in their training year and what helped them to get over it. Some referred to their families or their own resources of determination, but many also indicated that particular elements of the support network had been crucial in making them feel better:

- **Christmas holidays, stress, exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed and very under-supported.** I had decided to quit upon returning to school. Caledonian ball [a Teach First social event] motivated me and things seemed slightly easier on return.

- **When my school was bad and TF were basically saying it was because I was a crap teacher / failure.** Support from my TF housemates helped me through it and proved them wrong.

- **Lost total control of my Year 11 class and seemingly not having any of their respect.** Got over it by talking to my professional mentor.

- **After Friday period 5, some point in January. Despair after terrible lesson … my mentor helped me.**

In some cases the emotional stress was exacerbated by one potential supporter (for example, the subject mentor or Teach First) and the crucial thing was that the network was generally broad enough to include other people that the participant could turn to. However, a number of participants expressed some disappointment that Teach First staff were generally not a source of support, partly because they simply did not know enough about teaching to understand the pressures that participants were under.

For some of those who had withdrawn from the programme, the network had not provided the support they needed. In some cases this was because they felt they could not tell their peers how difficult they were finding it when everyone else seemed to be coping. The key element is the support from staff in the school; when this fails, the situation can seem very dire.

Many of the Cohort 1 participants commented that they were disappointed that there had been so few activities to bring them together, and maintain the excellent *esprit de corps* that had been developed at the Summer Institute. This seems to have been less of an issue among Cohort 2. However, participants in both cohorts commented that they would have liked to have had more effective communication with Teach First staff. They felt that electronic communication was impersonal, and would very much have welcomed a friendly letter or phone call. Some expressed the view that they wanted to be reminded from time to time of what Teach First stands for, and the reasons why they had joined.

### 3.6.7 Subject training days

All participants are required to attend six subject training days spread across the year. Some participants commented that these are helpful, and some suggested that it may be useful to have more. Other participants, generally the ones who were well-
supported in their schools, commented that the days were not offering them anything they did not already know, and that it is disruptive to be out of school, particularly when the subject training day fell on the same day of the week in consecutive half terms. Some school staff shared this view, commenting that certain classes suffered disproportionately. While CCCUC have attempted to vary the days, the feasibility of this is limited by timetabling constraints.

All the participants enjoyed meeting with their peer group, and found it valuable to have an opportunity to exchange lesson plans and resources. Most days included some less formal time when participants could talk about their experiences and problems, but the extent of this varied. Participants spoke positively of days when they came away with new ideas to use in their teaching.

The subject days that we observed were very varied in formality, type of content, and atmosphere. This partly reflected the wide variation in size of group, from 40 trainees down to just two (reflecting the different numbers of trainees recruited to each subject). In the second year, two groups were run in each of the larger subjects, thus reducing group size. This was welcomed by schools, because where they have two participants teaching the same subject they are not both absent on the same day.

Cohort 2 participants gave a significantly higher rating to subject training days when they completed the survey in November than did their Cohort 1 counterparts at the same point in the year. CCCUC have been working to ensure a more consistent experience for participants across different subjects. However, our observations suggest that there is still some diversity of approach. Moreover, there is an obvious difficulty in providing a satisfactory experience when there are only two participants teaching a subject.

Many participants suggested that it would be helpful to have more subject support from CCCUC. In 2004-5 this was provided for those in the schools in special measures and for a few participants whose subject knowledge had been a particular concern. The priority has been to continue to provide the regular fortnightly professional tutor visits; schools see this as an important aspect of the programme. Resourcing issues limit the total number of tutor visits that can be made.

### 3.6.8 Use of ICT in training

As explained earlier, the original aspirations for innovative use of ICT were not achieved because additional funding was not forthcoming to provide laptops to each participant. In the second year of the programme, a number of strategies were put in place to develop the use of ICT systems in training. All the tutors received focused training. Cohort 2 participants were encouraged to engage in on-line discussions even before the Summer Institute started, and ICT figured more prominently at the Institute, where participants were encouraged to make use of Blackboard. This was also explicitly encouraged at some subject training days.

However, it appears that in the second year of the programme use of Blackboard was still not widespread among participants, and those who were using it found it only of limited use (see Figure 4). This is partly because participants did not all have easy access to appropriate facilities. It appears that the participants liked the idea of having an on-line resource bank specific to Teach First, but did not necessarily feel motivated to contribute to building this up.
However, while participants did not report making great use of Blackboard, they did report using ICT in their teaching; 42% said that they used it in every lesson, and a further 36% used it most days. The most frequently used aspects of ICT were PowerPoint and interactive whiteboards. Most participants said they had developed their ICT skills either before they joined Teach First, or in their schools, or both.

Figure 4: In the last year, how often have you used Blackboard? (Cohort 2, July 05, N=139) How useful has this been? (N=78)

3.6.9 Second school experience

In the first year of the programme participants had to spend a total of ten days in a second school; in the second year this was reduced to five days. The schools were responsible for organising this. The arrangements varied: most participants spent a block of time in the second school. Questionnaire responses showed that this was generally the most effective arrangement. However, in a few cases the block of time was right at the end of the school year, and was not found useful. A minority of the participants did a serial placement, spending, for example, one afternoon a week in the second school over a period of a term. This was much less effective. Participants on such placements complained that they observed the same lessons every week, which was of limited value.

In questionnaire responses, the second school placement was seen by almost all participants as offering three main benefits: identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their own school; seeing different systems and ways of organising things; and being able to observe other teachers. Slightly fewer participants felt that they had gained ideas and resources for teaching. The vast majority of interviewees spoke very positively of their second school experience. Some noted that it was particularly useful to have opportunities to observe other teachers; they found they were able to learn more from observing than they had at the start of the programme. But the most frequent comment was that it was useful to see the differences between schools with very similar pupil intakes. Those in well-organised schools with good assessment results (who had in many cases felt disappointed that they had not been placed in really challenging schools) came to appreciate the leadership and ethos of their own schools. Similarly, some of those in poorly managed schools with major behaviour problems realised that it was possible to develop a different ethos. Only a very small minority felt that the experience had been a waste of time.

There had been some concern that by swapping schools within the Teach First network, participants might not see a sufficiently different environment; however,
what the participants welcomed was seeing how much schools with similar intakes could differ. In particular, the second school placement enabled them to recognise what was meant by a school ethos, and how these varied.

Some schools and participants commented on the difficulty of arranging the second school experience, and of managing it within the timetable. They also commented on the cost of supply cover. In contrast, some participants noted that they had undertaken second school experience entirely in their ‘free’ periods, so it had added substantially to their workload.

3.6.10 QTS assessment
In view of the innovative nature of the programme, CCCUC felt that it was very important that the QTS assessment procedures should be very thorough. In the first year every participant was visited and observed by an external assessor. Trainees were generally informed of any weaknesses identified in their report, so that they could work on these in their last few weeks in school. Final assessment took place in Canterbury when participants returned after the end of term in July to attend the Summer Institute for three days and present their portfolios. At this point they also met the new cohort.

In the second year the process was broadly similar, but the majority of the assessor visits to schools were undertaken by the tutors on the programme, who assessed trainees that they had not been supporting. Schools and tutors reported some teething problems with this arrangement, but had no major reservations about it.

Half the Cohort 1 participants indicated that the assessment process was confusing, as did some of the school interviewees. This was partly because in the first year documentation was received by participants after they had started work in schools, and as a consequence, it was not all thoroughly read. In addition, at the time of the first Summer Institute, Qualifying to Teach was undergoing minor revisions and copies of the new version were not available.

In the second year the documentation was available in good time, and so participants were given far more information about assessment from the start of the programme. As a result a higher proportion (70%) indicated that the requirements were clear.

Some participants and some school respondents commented that they felt the process was over-burdensome and complex. For many participants in both cohorts, the external assessor visits provided positive feedback and external validation that they were doing a good job in difficult circumstances. However, a few participants described negative experiences, and reported feeling very discouraged, even though when they finally received the written feedback it was positive.

Some schools have commented that the lateness of the decisions in relation to QTS was problematic in terms of sorting out new contracts for participants.

3.6.11 Overall evaluation of teacher training
At the end of their first year Cohort 1 were asked to indicate what aspects of the year they felt had contributed to their success or had caused difficulty. Their responses are shown on Figure 5. About half identified the support structures as helpful, while around 80% indicated that their workload, paperwork and pupil behaviour had all caused difficulty.
At the end of their second year in school, they were asked to evaluate various aspects of the programme (Figure 6). Again, support in school emerged as a concern, with a quarter indicating that they had not been well-supported. Similarly around a quarter disagreed with the statement ‘The teacher training I received was effective’, while 19% strongly agreed and 37% slightly agreed. Factor analysis using previous responses relating to aspects of the Summer Institute, the support provided by schools and the on-going support provided by CCCUC, indicates that the main factors contributing to the overall perception of the effectiveness (or not) of the teacher training were the perceived effectiveness of the professional tutor and of the subject training days. Subject studies at the Summer Institute also contributed.

Figure 6: Cohort 1 evaluation of training, support and work in schools at the end of the programme (N = 81) (July – Oct 05)
It is interesting to note that around three-quarters of the participants felt that Teach First participants had had an impact in improving their schools; this is higher than the proportion who thought their teacher training was effective, or who thought they were well-supported in school. However, this is perhaps consistent with the Teach First message discussed earlier, that teachers achieve success through their character and determination in adverse circumstances, rather than through a team effort.

While almost 80% of the participants strongly or slightly agreed with the statement, ‘if teachers are to work in challenging schools, their training should take place in such schools’, some felt that this had some dangers:

There is a danger that expectations can be lowered by being surrounded by potential difficulties. Some experience of less challenging schools would allow trainees to safely experiment with teaching techniques building the confidence to use them effectively in challenging environments. (Cohort 2)

Some time in the first few years all teachers should work in a very high achieving (non-challenging) school to see what can really be expected of teenagers, and bring this mindset back into challenging schools. (Cohort 2)

3.6.12 Summary: school-based training

- A strong support network is an important element of Teach First, and is vital to support trainee teachers working in challenging schools.
- Support structures include documentation, professional and subject mentors in school, visits from a professional tutor from CCCUC, subject training days and the placing of participants in groups in school.
- Participants felt that the most effective support was provided by the peer group.
- Support from the subject mentor and the previous Teach First cohort was seen as more effective in the autumn term than later in the year. In contrast support from professional tutors was seen as more effective later in the year.
- Support varied enormously across schools, and between departments. Where support in school was not adequate, this was often a factor that contributed to withdrawal.
- Websites were seen as very useful, but the attempt to build up a shared collection of useful resources on Blackboard was less used and less valued.
- The Teach First Journal was perceived as a useful way of structuring reflection.
- Subject training days were generally seen as useful, particularly as the CCCUC tutor who visits was not in most cases a specialist in the participant’s subject.
- Second school experience was most valuable when it was taken as a block. It was particularly helpful in enabling participants to understand what was meant by school ethos, and how this could vary.
- QTS assessment was very thorough, but some schools and participants questioned whether it was an over-complex process.

Many elements of the school-based teacher training can be identified as good practice, but good practice that is not unique to Teach First. This includes, for example, the Journal, and the subject training days.
The support structures are well built into the programme, and the peer group support is a crucial element. This comes partly from placing groups of participants in schools, and partly from the *esprit de corps* built up during the Summer Institute.
3.7 A two year programme

The Teach First programme involves a two-year commitment from participants. At the end of the first year they achieve QTS; they then teach a second year as NQTs in the same school. An Education Conference is held in March; this took place for the first time when the Cohort 1 participants were in their second year, but is intended to be an annual event. Leadership training starts in the summer term of the first year, and continues through the second year. As well as the core course (Foundations of Leadership, run by Tanaka Business College), participants are able to undertake internships in the summer holidays, to have coaches from a variety of sectors, and to attend a range of events where they can meet people who have been successful in various careers. Second year participants are eligible for the Teach First Awards, and can also nominate their mentors.

While this evaluation focuses on the teacher training provided through the Teach First programme, it is not possible to consider this in isolation from other aspects of the programme. This is partly because the leadership aspects and the teaching aspects interact. Some schools indicated that the possibilities for forming more business links had been a factor in the decision to take TF trainees. For the participants, too, this was an attraction; in interview they spoke of the personal links they would form, and the promise that their CVs would be read by participating companies. It was precisely this that caused anxiety to some headteachers: they expressed anxiety that the business activities would entice participants away from teaching; Teach First staff, on the other hand, see the leadership training as just as relevant and useful for those who stay in teaching as it is for those who aspire to other careers. They also argue that participants’ business links could be beneficial for the schools.

This section outlines the range of activities in the programme as a whole, and the various groups’ perceptions of them, but first considers the various stakeholders’ responses to the idea of a two-year commitment to the programme and the particular school.

3.7.1 The two year commitment

The idea of a two year course, spanning the training year and the induction year is being developed in a number of teacher training institutions, for example, as an MTeach degree. However, the emphasis in these cases is a consistent programme of professional development, rather than continuity in the teaching environment, as is the case on Teach First.

Cohort 2 participants identified the two-year commitment, and staying in the same school for two years as strengths of the programme. They felt that two years was as much time as they wanted to commit themselves for, in their current state of uncertainty about their future careers.

The school staff were positive that the Teach First teachers would stay for two years, feeling that this gives schools a chance to benefit from the hard work that they put into training. Some felt that the school would have benefited even if all the participants left at the end of the two years, and argued that it was also important that some future business leaders, policy makers etc. should have a sound knowledge of educational issues. However, others queried the value of the effort and money invested if a substantial proportion of the participants could not be attracted to remain in the profession:
If they did leave after two years I would think they’ve taken an awful lot and haven’t really given very much for it. (Professional mentor)

It is a massive investment of time and energy from the department if she doesn’t [stay beyond two years]. I will cry if she doesn’t because it is a huge investment. That is my one fear – as a department we spend this huge amount of time on people and it is in the hope that they stay. (Subject mentor)

A particular concern for one school interviewee was that the two-year commitment may have a negative impact:

The downside is that if you are one of these candidates who decides at the end of two years that you’re going to go, inevitably there will be a point in their second year that they’re no longer as enthused, no longer as committed because they know that at the end of the year they’ll be going. And then performance can fall. (Subject mentor)

Some of the participant interviews have offered evidence to support this hypothesis: two Cohort 1 men said they had put much less effort in as the second year progressed. One Cohort 2 interviewee at the start of her second year said:

I’ve got everything I want to get out of teaching now I think, and it’s time to move on, but unfortunately I’ve got nine months more to slog which I find frustrating. (Cohort 2)

This contrasted with other participants who argued that because they are only in teaching for two years ‘they put an awful lot of effort into trying to succeed in that short amount of time’.

3.7.2 Support in the NQT year

Cohort 1 Teach First teachers received very limited support from their schools during their NQT year. This was mainly because they had already attended the NQT sessions provided by the school. Almost 60% reported that they were offered the same programme in both the training and NQT years. In some schools a small number of different sessions were included, but only 9% of the participants reported that they had attended an NQT programme that was different from the professional development sessions attended in the training year. Very little other professional development activity was made available in the schools: overall 50% of participants reported no new NQT induction sessions and no other substantial professional development activities. This would be a cause for concern in any groups of NQTs, but particularly so in a programme that has such a strong motivation to develop participants.

The original specification for Teach First indicated that some support for participants in their second year would be offered by the training provider where requested and funded by the schools as part of the NQT entitlement to an individual programme of support. While this idea was not actually put into practice during the course of this evaluation, it might nevertheless be very useful in the particular context of this programme, where challenging schools may not feel that they can offer additional development sessions for second year participants over and above their normal NQT provision.

There are plans to develop a Masters programme linked to Teach First. This will be a very useful way to support those who want to stay in teaching. It also seems crucial that those who intend to leave should be supported through the induction year. The general lack of any continuity in professional development in relation to teaching through the two years of the programme is perhaps a missed opportunity to capitalise on the potential of having a two-year programme.
3.7.3 Work and pay in the second year

Some schools offered promotion to their second year participants; in some cases this was a head of department role, but more often it was second in the department or year, or a specific responsibility for some aspect of their subject (e.g. ICT in the subject). In some schools new responsibilities were presented as professional development opportunities, and did not attract extra pay; in other schools participants received management points: for example, one NQT participant was appointed head of a maths department, paid on M3 plus 4 management points. Some school interviewees considered it inappropriate to expect an NQT to take on so much responsibility:

*We wouldn’t expect that when they are NQTs. A tutor was telling me yesterday – the girl down the road who went into a school with no RE department is now head of RE! Good grief, that is a huge undertaking, and then to be inducting someone else next year, which she is going to be doing apparently. No [ours] are just going to be form teachers and taking a full NQT timetable.* (Professional mentor)

Certain schools gave their Teach First participants the impression that there is some national regulation that prevents NQTs from being offered management responsibilities; this led to some perceptions of unfairness among the participants.

Many participants welcomed, and even demanded promotions, and were explicit that they wanted appropriate payment and recognition for their work:

*I said to the school basically if they wanted to keep me they would have to give me the management responsibilities for the head of [subject].* (Cohort 2)

The disparity in salaries referred to in Section 3.5.8 increased during the second year. Table 7 shows the pay levels that Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 participants indicated they would be receiving in their NQT year. (Some were unable to answer this question when they completed the questionnaire in July because the school had not yet informed them.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohort 1 (July 04)</th>
<th>Cohort 2 (July 05)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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<td>M3</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>M4</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>N</td>
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Schools offering promotion to Teach First teachers had often done so as a retention strategy, and the pay offered in the second year was for many participants a factor in their decision whether to stay in teaching or to leave at the end of the year. However, while the amount earned was a factor (and some participants reported in interview that they were pleasantly surprised by how much they could earn as teachers in London), what emerged as more important to participants was the extent to which they felt that their schools valued them.

While many participants welcomed recognition in the form of responsibilities and pay, some were unwilling to take on responsibilities in their induction year, or even in the year after, because they did not feel ready. One interviewee complained that after her head of department left she had decided not to apply for the job, because she wanted to focus on consolidating her teaching. She did not feel that she was yet ready
to take on the responsibility of mentoring other NQTs. However, the school did not respond to her wishes, and had left her in the position of acting head of department, making no effort to recruit a replacement.

Several interviewees reported unhappiness at the start of the second year because their schools had apparently ignored their preferences in the timetable set for their NQT year. This included, for example, timetabling them to teach unfamiliar subjects, or not offering them the opportunity to take particular groups that they had been working with through into Year 11. In such cases, the participants saw the timetabling as an indicator that they were not valued, and this clearly impacted on some decisions about whether to continue in teaching.

While all the schools hoped that their Teach First teachers would stay a third year or longer, not all took active steps to retain them. As this section has shown, retention strategies need to take into account the needs and wishes of the particular individual, and the Teach First teachers varied in what they wanted.

3.7.4 The Education Conference

The Education Conference, which was held for the first time in the second year of the programme, was organised by Teach First with the intention of re-motivating and inspiring participants, and stimulating them to further efforts. It was open to both cohorts. There were keynote sessions and a wide range of workshops put on by teachers, teacher trainers, researchers and other experts, as well as Teach First participants themselves. It was held on a Saturday. Attendance was rather disappointing, at only about a third of the potential total. However, those who attended rated it very highly, and for those participants, it evidently had exactly the impact that was intended:

*It was brilliant, I learnt a lot and it got me thinking more positively at a difficult time of year.*

*I thought it was an excellent day which re-energised me and enthused me for my teaching this year.*

3.7.5 The Teach First Awards

Teach First has set up its own teaching awards for participants and their mentors. The first Teach First Awards ceremony took place in July 2005. There were a number of categories of award, including, for example, one that aimed to recognise those participants who had motivated young people to achieve outstanding results.

Teach First see these awards as a way of motivating the participants to continue to work to develop their teaching and pupils’ learning in the second year of the programme. They argue that Teach First teachers have academic and competitive backgrounds, and are likely to respond to ways of measuring their performance against that of their peers. This is a rather different rationale from that used in the National Teaching Awards, which were set up to celebrate excellence in teaching, and to publicise outstanding work. The Teach First awards are not part of the initial teacher training, but are designed as an incentive to raise performance, and so are briefly discussed here.

We asked Cohort 1 participants what they felt about having awards: 37% thought it a positive move; 42% were neutral, and 20% said they would prefer not to have awards. This last group were the most likely to write additional comments:
It was absurd, I was nominated then was expected to justify that nomination. That's a nonsensical idea, so I didn't, thus missing out on any hope of an award, but retaining my self-respect.

Everyone on Teach First has worked extremely hard in a wide range of circumstances. It seems unfair to single out one or two. Also, many schools did not nominate or contribute to the awards and so many deserving people were not considered.

Awards are based on a who-knows-who basis rather than on participants' achievements relative to others. The awards devalue the significant achievements made by all participants over the course of two challenging years.

However, some participants made positive comments:

I nominated [name]. ... I think it is a very good idea actually as an extra way of getting a different kind of funding into schools. I think she certainly deserves some kind of recognition outside of school for what she had been doing.

But while some participants considered that it was good to recognise achievement, there was no evidence that they were motivated by the prospect of getting an award.

3.7.6 Foundations of Leadership

Section 3.1 explained that a key aspect of the success of Teach First in recruiting graduates from elite universities into teaching was the emphasis on the transferable skills that would be acquired through teaching, and in particular on the idea that these transferable skills relate to leadership, and are valuable for leadership in any sector. This recruitment message was strengthened by including as a core element of the Teach First programme some leadership training, through which participants would recognise and build on the leadership skills they were acquiring through teaching, as well as opportunities for coaching and internships. Table 8 shows that more than two-thirds of the Cohort 2 participants rated both these as important attractions that influenced their decisions to join.

Table 8: How important are the various opportunities for leadership and business training in attracting good graduates from elite universities to apply to Teach First? Cohort 2 responses (1 = a major influence, 4 = not an influence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent did opportunities for business coaching and internships influence your decision?</th>
<th>rated 1 or 2</th>
<th>rated 3 or 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did the opportunity to undertake the Foundations of Leadership course influence your decision?</td>
<td>rated 1 or 2</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rated 3 or 4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The business aspects of the programme were also seen as important by some of the headteachers, who hoped that this would offer their schools opportunities to develop links with businesses. Because these aspects of the programme are so crucial in attracting graduates, and because the inclusion of such elements is innovative within initial teacher training, we discuss them briefly here.

It was always intended that Teach First would include a business or leadership training. This was initially described as a mini-MBA. The programme that was designed, Foundations of Leadership, was a considerable disappointment to some Cohort 1 participants who had not understood that the term mini-MBA does not imply
an accredited course. They expressed concern about whether the Foundations of Leadership qualification would be valued by employers in the way an MBA is.

The course is now described much more clearly on the website: it is ‘a unique course [which] has been tailor-made … in conjunction with Tanaka Business School and employers from every sector’. It involves some compulsory elements, as well as options focusing on different employment sectors, including an education leadership option run by the Institute of Education. Thus those who are interested in remaining in education are able to attend two days focusing on leadership in education. The training takes place on specific weekends, and in some half-terms, as well as on two days in the summer holidays.

About a dozen Cohort 1 participants decided not to take the Foundations of Leadership course, in most cases because they had decided that they wanted to stay in teaching, and they preferred to spend their time and energy improving their teaching, or having restful holidays, rather than thinking about leadership at this stage. Some others attended the initial sessions but then dropped out:

- Irrelevant to my future plans, attended summer sessions but demotivated by ethos and attitude of teachers.
- Not important, took up time.

Of the Cohort 1 participants who graduated at the end of the two year period, 67% had completed Foundations of Leadership; the majority of those who did not were women, many of whom intended to stay in teaching. Teach First have now made core parts of the Foundations of Leadership programme mandatory for all participants in subsequent cohorts. In interviews, Cohort 2 participants have expressed some disquiet about this; many feel the programme should be optional.

Of those in Cohort 1 who completed Foundations of Leadership and completed our questionnaire, 24% found it ‘extremely useful’, 61% ‘fairly useful’ and 15% ‘not particularly useful’.

Some Cohort 2 participants commented very positively about the Foundations of Leadership days during the summer holidays:

- They were very well focused lectures, with kind of team exercises in the afternoons which was nice because suddenly we were working with rational individuals who listened to you, which was fun. … Yeah, it was three really fulfilling days. (Cohort 2)

Others expressed uncertainty about the value of the course:

- Qualification gained will be an asset in the future although I am unsure as to whether I will use the specific knowledge gained. (Cohort 1)

- Employers will think that it was more comprehensive than it really was. Did not gain that much from it but still glad that I did it. Makes your CV look a bit more business-oriented. (Cohort 1)

Those interviewees who had studied business or economics at university did not consider it to be useful:

- Very low level, equivalent to very early on in my business/management degree. Won’t be of any use to me. (Cohort 1)

One compulsory aspect of the Foundations of Leadership programme was to write a two-page proposal for a project designed to enhance pupil performance or confidence by using the support of industry and the school staff. These proposals were judged,
and the best ideas were turned into business plans and executed, with some financial support. The completed projects were then judged, and an award ceremony held. Most participants were involved only in the initial planning, but for a minority this was an interesting opportunity to carry through their plans, and benefit their schools and pupils.

3.7.7 Internships

Teach First arranged a number of short (normally three-week) internships, which took place in the summer holidays after QTS is gained. These were in a wide variety of organisations including banks, government departments and charities. Participants had to apply for places in the organisation of their choice; some were unsuccessful (particularly in the case of internships that were very popular, for example, those that involved opportunities to travel).

About half the Cohort 1 participants undertook internships; this included a slightly higher proportion of men than women. Those who did not do so argued that they needed a break in the summer; some added that if they did work they wanted to focus on preparation for the second year in school. In the survey completed immediately before the internships took place we asked participants what benefits they expected. In the subsequent survey we asked what benefits had been achieved (Table 9).

Table 9: In what ways do you expect to benefit / did you benefit from the internship? (Only those Cohort 1 participants expecting to undertake, or having undertaken, internships responded: n=60 in July 04, n=40 in July 05,)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major benefit expected (July 04)</th>
<th>Major benefit gained (July 05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarify my ideas about a future career</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience a different work environment</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make useful connections</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new skills</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do something worthwhile</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, participants had not benefited as much as they had expected, particularly in relation to ‘making useful connections’. However, more felt that they had done something worthwhile than had anticipated this.

Many interviewees gave accounts of disappointment: one had worked hard on a paper that was eventually published without his contribution being acknowledged. Another had to work at home:

_They didn't give us office space we had to work at home and so it was really just basically dogsbody work. I enjoyed what I did a bit, it was interesting and it was worth doing but basically ... I didn't form links and bonds._

However, some stated that the internship had been very useful in determining what they might do in the future:

_I did two internships with [company] which I enjoyed immensely but decided the corporate avenue wasn’t for me. I would find it soul-destroying being in front of a computer all day and go down that particular track. ... Some people said was it a waste of time but no, it really wasn’t because I decided categorically that an office job in a big corporation is not for me. So it was immensely useful._
3.7.8 Coaching

Teach First offers to provide a coach for those participants who want one. This is:

… expected to benefit participants as they seek to define their career goals, tackle issues in their classes, and consider how other organisations can be brought in to help their schools and pupils most strategically. (Foundations of Leadership Prospectus)

Many of the interviewees who had coaches reported that they found them very useful; this included some who had chosen not to participate in other Teach First leadership activities. Some commented that this had been useful in relation to their careers:

She gave me a lot of insight … into the accounting profession and we spent a lot of time talking through … which particular firms I should apply for and I think it was because of our discussion that I ended up, in the end I actually only applied for the one that I got.

Others found it helpful in relation to their school context:

I thought she was very good and she helped me deal a lot with the conflict with the other member of staff in my department. She helped me think about how I wanted to deal with that problem and so that was very useful.

However, while these were positive experiences, a number of other participants commented that the coaches allocated did not match their needs.

3.7.9 Leadership activities and career decisions

At the end of the two years, we asked Cohort 1 participants to offer an overall evaluation of the various leadership activities (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Cohort 1 evaluation of training, support and work in schools at the end of the programme (N = 81)

About half those responding considered the leadership activities to be effective. Three-quarters of the participants considered that their experience on the programme had helped them to decide what they wanted to do in the future, though quite clearly this was not only related to the leadership aspects of the programme. Less than half felt that Teach First had supported them in getting the jobs they wanted. Possibly they had expected too much, assuming that the prestige of the programme and the involvement of various companies as sponsors and supporters would boost their chances of getting onto prestigious graduate training schemes, and that Teach First staff would offer direct support with this. Some felt very let down:

During my job hunting I was expecting Teach First to have more clout with their sponsors for example by getting them to guarantee first round interviews, or to provide
constructive feedback after an unsuccessful interview (which employers are often reluctant to do). (Cohort 1)

3.7.10 Summary: the two year programme

- The fact that Teach First participants make a two-year commitment to the programme and the particular school was generally seen as positive. Some schools felt that if all participants withdrew at the end of the two years the school would not have benefited from its investment.

- Cohort 1 participants received very little professional development or support in their NQT year.

- The Education Conference was regarded very positively by those who attended it.

- Reactions to the Teach First Awards were mixed; there was little suggestion that participants were motivated by the prospect of receiving an award.

- Responses to the leadership activities varied. The group who were least likely to participate or to be enthusiastic were those (mainly women) who intend to make a long-term career in teaching.

The continuity from teacher training through the induction year is clearly an element of good practice, but the limited continuity in professional development as teachers from training to induction year is a missed opportunity.

The emphasis on transferable skills, which is a key attraction of the programme and an element of good practice, is made explicit through the inclusion of leadership training. The business links also played a role in attracting schools to join the programme.
3.8 The partnership of Teach First, CCCUC and schools

Teacher training normally involves partnerships between schools and training providers (or Designated Recommending Bodies, in the case of the GTP). The Teach First programme involves more partners, Teach First itself, Canterbury Christ Church University, the schools, the business sponsors, Tanaka Business School, and the Institute of Education which contributes to the education leadership courses.

Partnerships generally have teething problems in the early stages, when roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. This partnership was no exception. The difficulties of creating an effective partnership were perhaps exacerbated by the very different cultures and expectations of appropriate behaviour of the parties involved; education professionals tend to have a different culture and professional expectations from those in business.

3.8.1 Teach First and CCCUC

As time has gone on, Teach First and CCCUC have developed an effective relationship. This followed considerable discussions about values. Teach First wanted participants to demonstrate a commitment to ‘Teach First values’ in addition to meeting the Standards for QTS. After much discussion, it was agreed that the Teach First values – commitment, excellence, integrity, collaboration and innovation – are all present in the QTS standards, and the Teach First programme handbook now includes a table that maps the Teach First values against the QTS Standards.

A particularly impressive feature of the partnership is the ongoing attention to improving every aspect of the programme.

3.8.2 Communication issues

In the first year, some schools were not aware of the partnership, and felt that they were able to communicate effectively with the professional tutor as a main point of contact. However, other schools commented that they found the partnership confusing. They were not clear about the roles of CCCUC and Teach First, and were not sure who they should approach about what; thus they tended to conflate the two organisations. They felt that communication between Teach First, CCCUC and the schools was not always working effectively. In July 2004 about a third of respondents to the school questionnaire commented negatively about communication between TF/CCCUC and schools, and some expressed the view that they did not feel involved as partners. Examples of poor communication offered on the questionnaire and in interviews included matters that were properly the role of Teach First (e.g. placements) and matters that were the role of Canterbury (e.g. documentation about training, communication with professional tutors).

Many of the Cohort 1 participants also commented on communication issues. Some felt that they had been insufficiently informed; others emphasised the poor communication between Teach First and CCCUC and the schools, which they felt contributed to some ‘antagonism’ to the programme. In some cases this was exacerbated by poor communication within schools. School staff and participants referred to the lack of experience among Teach First staff of teaching or teacher training in England as a hindrance to effective communication, because they did not have a sufficient understanding of the system.
The data from Cohort 2 participant questionnaires suggest that the ‘old’ schools are now well-informed about the programme. However, in interviews, staff in schools new to the programme commented on poor communication, both in relation to placements and training. It is not possible to say where the problems are occurring. The programme has certainly made strenuous efforts to communicate the training requirements to schools. Nevertheless, even schools that were very enthusiastic about the programme reported concern about late arrival of documentation and information. Possibly some of the problems lie in internal communication within the school. Ensuring that the headteacher or professional mentor understands the programme may not produce the required outcomes in terms of the practices of the subject mentors.

The London Schools Advisory Group has proved a useful forum for developing clearer guidelines that are acceptable to all parties. Headteachers who attended the meetings said they felt that they were able to influence the development of the programme and that they were consulted. However, some of the school staff we interviewed felt that they had a very limited partnership with either Teach First or CCCUC, and that the only ‘partnership’ was with the professional tutor.

Some professional mentors indicated that they would welcome a forum where they could exchange views with others in the same role.

3.8.3 Summary: The partnership of Teach First, CCCUC and schools

- While there were teething problems in the early stages of the partnership, Teach First and CCCUC have developed an effective working relationship, and shared understandings.

- Some school interviewees reported that poor communication with both Teach First and CCCUC was a continuing concern, though it our impression that weaknesses in communication within these challenging schools had also been a contributory factor.

- The London Schools Advisory group is a useful forum for reaching agreements about issues around the school placement.

Good practice in the area of partnership includes the consistent efforts to improve communication and include schools in the processes of making decisions about the development of the programme.
4. Outcomes

The outcomes of the Teach First programme can be measured in a variety of ways: the impact on schools; retention through the programme; destinations after the two years are completed; and the impact on the participants themselves.

4.1 Contributions in challenging schools

The TF website states that ‘Teach First participants are expected to not only make a difference in the classroom, but also to their school as a whole.’ This includes raising aspirations, and ‘measurably’ benefiting pupil performance and the quality of life for all.

Some schools reported at the end of the training year that the Teach First trainees were already considerable assets and that there would be nothing but benefit for the school in the induction year. Many school interviewees were able to give examples of participants making a difference in relation to the pupils in the classes they were teaching, by providing continuity of teaching, and being creative, energetic and hard-working. Some also gave examples of participants initiating clubs or other activities for pupils.

The trainees this year are really high quality trainees and a lot of them are working with key exam groups in Year 10 for example and some of the sixth form groups and because of their subject knowledge they’re able to give a lot there. They’re really pushing them.

The lessons that I’ve observed have been fantastic, really high quality lessons and they’re working at the same level as someone who’s qualified, even higher. … They’re doing extra curricular activities to get pupils more motivated, they’re trying out all kinds of techniques and strategies in their classroom which is great, really experimenting. And they’re pushing each other along as well. They work very closely as a group to support each other. Anything that goes on they just want to be part of it. (Professional mentor)

There are massive benefits to the school, there is no doubt of that, and the benefit is that you get professional people who are highly motivated, enthusiastic, well educated, you haven’t got to do anything for them in terms of subject knowledge, and they seem to have adapted to professionalism without being told. You know they are naturally professional from Day One … and it has really worked, and there has been a big benefit to the school, there’s no doubt of that. (Professional mentor)

Some school mentors felt that the Teach First teachers’ professional attitude and creative approach to teaching had had an impact on the mentors themselves and on other staff in their departments, reinvigorating them:

I think she has made me think about how I teach and perhaps new ways of teaching, because she has come with some new ideas, which she’s shared with me and I’ve shared with her … It’s a way of me reflecting on things that I already know. Actually a way of me actually using things that I knew before and have stopped using now. (Subject mentor)

I think [name] has been instrumental in making some people wake up and get out of the comfort zone, because the standard of her presentation and her thorough approach make some people who have been teaching for a long time realise that actually they have let their standards slide. So it’s been great having her as a guilty conscience to others. (Subject mentor)

Responses to the summer 2004 questionnaire to schools included many examples of ways in which Teach First participants had made a difference. These included making a difference to pupils through excellent and imaginative teaching and regular
attendance, with some suggestions that assessment results had improved; involvement in and initiation of a wide range of extra-curricular activities; and innovation within their departments, as well as in some cases stimulating a professional dialogue among teachers in the department. One headteacher commented that maths SATs results had improved to levels that had not previously been reached, and linked this directly to having the maths department staffed with maths specialists for the first time ever.

While most school respondents felt the school had benefited, some were more cautious, because they were very aware of the costs, particularly in staff time. This depended very much on the quality of the trainees in the school. One school believed that the first year involved more cost (in terms of staff time providing support) than benefits, but that the second year would be ‘pay-back’ time. Many mentors reported spending up to five hours a week supporting one individual; professional mentors in schools with many trainees reported this as a major part of their workload. However, there were variations, and some schools reported far lower amounts of time spent. A few schools indicated that the support level needed was higher than that required for a PGCE student, though this was not something we asked about directly.

Some indicated that the financial costs were also high. There was some specific concern about financial costs for cover in relation to subject days and second school placement, and the payment to Teach First of £3,500 (2003-4 figures) over the two years for recruiting Teach First trainees. Those schools that had allocated lower timetables than recommended and/or were paying higher salaries inevitably saw the costs as greater.

Many school interviewees argued that the costs would prove worthwhile only if the participants could be persuaded to stay beyond the two years. In the light of these schools’ comments, we have reviewed how many of the Cohort 1 participants who started work in each school in September 2003 are still teaching in that school. (It should be noted that participants indicated that the destination data they provided was tentative, and that some were undecided when they made their return, or did not respond; thus the numbers in this section may not be totally accurate.)

Of the 44 schools that took Cohort 1 trainees in September 2003, a third lost all of these during, or at the end of, the two-year programme. This included one school that took seven and another that took six, but did not retain any of them for a third year. Another third of the schools had lost more than half their Teach First teachers. The remaining third managed to retain at least half (though in several cases this was simply one out of two Teach First teachers). Of these, three schools retained all those originally placed there. Another school could be seen as a net gainer; it retained three out of four of those originally placed there, and in addition, gained two who moved from other schools in September 2005.

The schools in which participants were staying had significantly lower free school meals figures than those where all participants left by the end of the two years. There were two clear exceptions to this but these were both schools with unusually high attainment in relation to the free school meals figure.

There was some correlation between previous measures of participant satisfaction and the schools they have stayed in or left, but this is not clear-cut. But, as we have pointed out previously, the key factor in determining whether a participant is happy or not is generally the department rather than the school.
A key issue here is whether schools could retain a higher proportion of participants by putting in place retention strategies as discussed in Section 3.7.3. Some school interviewees talked about this, emphasising the importance of both professional development and offering increased responsibilities and pay. It is important here to be sensitive to the preferences of individual participants. As we have shown, some want responsibility and recognition for their work, while others would prefer to develop further as teachers before taking on leadership roles. A key time to focus on longer-term retention is at the end of the training year. At this time most participants have not made their minds up whether or not they wish to continue in teaching, and where schools have responded to preferences in relation to timetable and roles, they have had a better chance of retaining participants for a third year.

4.2 Retention on the programme

Table 10 shows the numbers of participants in each cohort at various stages in the programme.

Table 10: Total number of Teach First participants in Cohorts 1 and 2 at various stages of the programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>started Summer Institute</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>started teaching in September</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gained QTS by following September</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching in September of second year</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completed the programme</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It shows that after a year, the proportion that have withdrawn has been very similar in each cohort. However, while more in Cohort 1 dropped out before starting in school, a higher proportion of those in Cohort 2 withdrew after they had started teaching. The impact of their withdrawal on schools was therefore more serious.

In Cohort 1 the proportions of men and women withdrawing were equal, at 15% of each group, but in Cohort 2 a slightly higher proportion of women withdrew (18% compared to 16% of the men). The proportion of minority ethnic participants withdrawing was significantly higher than of white participants in Cohort 1 (20% compared with 10%, ethnicity data missing for 9 participants), but this pattern was not repeated in Cohort 2. However, it is something that Teach First and CCCU are aware of and are monitoring. One approach that was being used was ‘peer buddying’ bringing together minority ethnic participants from previous cohorts with those in the training year. In Cohort 1 withdrawal was particularly high among the English teachers (23%).

We have interviewed a total of ten participants who have withdrawn from the programme, and in addition have been able to look back at previous questionnaires and interviews with other participants who have withdrawn.

Key factors in withdrawal are:

- not being fully committed to the Teach First programme: this applies only to withdrawals early in the Summer Institute;
- personal reasons (family, health etc.);
• teaching more than one subject, or a subject in which the trainee did not feel that their subject knowledge was adequate: this applied mainly to Cohort 1, and the strategies put in place through the Key Requirements should prevent withdrawal for this reason in the future;
• not having adequate support in the school;
• dissatisfaction with the school;
• not enjoying teaching, or not making progress;
• not meeting their own expectations in terms of making a difference.
In general more than one of these factors has been of significance in the decision to withdraw.

4.3 Destinations on completing the Teach First programme

The data we have on final destinations is incomplete. Figure 8 and Table 11 combine the information that Teach First have with the information that we collected in our final survey, and show the destinations of all the participants who started the Teach First programme at the Summer Institute in 2003.

Figure 8: Destinations of Cohort 1 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK teaching</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching abroad</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other work</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undecided, career break</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdrawn</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching in the same Teach First school</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching in another TF school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching in another UK school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching abroad</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education not teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city and finance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government, policy and non-profit</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industry and technology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career break</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no information</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Destinations of Cohort 1 participants: detailed categories

7 See Table 10 for details of timing of withdrawal.
There were some differences by gender. Of the women, 44% were teaching in UK schools, compared to 38% of the men; 27% of the women had got jobs outside teaching, compared to 37% of the men. Table 12 compares these figures to the expectations for the year after they achieved QTS that participants had indicated at various stages of the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>DESTINATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 03</td>
<td>July 04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teach in UK state sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-teaching career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In November 2003, many participants said they had no idea what they would be doing in the future, and so the percentages suggesting any specific occupation were lower than the reality in 2005. But in July 2004, when they gained QTS, a smaller proportion of both men and women thought they would go into teaching than had done earlier in the year. When these figures are compared with the final destination data (autumn 2005) the proportion of women going into teaching was slightly higher than was predicted in November 2003 (probably because those who were undecided in 2003 have now mostly made up their minds).

However, the really significant change was in the proportion of men who were teaching – a far higher proportion than had predicted they would do so. The qualitative data point to two key factors in this. One is that with rapid promotion, they were earning more in teaching than they had anticipated. The second is that a number of the men interviewed had not achieved the jobs they were aspiring to in other sectors, so had decided to teach for a further year before moving on. The data collected in the final questionnaire supported this – 43% of the women who were teaching in the year after completing the programme saw this as the start of ‘a long career in teaching’, while only 33% of the men did so. And whereas only 10% of the women who were teaching agreed that this was ‘one more year in teaching before moving into another career’, 40% of men did so.

Overall, of those who were teaching in 2005-6, 41% indicated that they anticipated a long career in teaching; 17% expected to teach for a few years, 20% intended to do just one more year in school, and the remainder were undecided. This suggests, then, that just 17% out of the 186 originally recruited expect to teach as a main career.

Destinations varied by subject. Considering only those who completed the Teach First programme, the proportion of each of the larger subject groups who were teaching either in the same Teach First school or another school used by the programme was in a challenging school was highest for English (61%), MFL (60%) and geography.

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8 If only those who completed the Teach First programme are considered, 49% of women and 38% of men were teaching in a Teach First school, and 2% of women and 7% of men in other schools in the UK.
(57%); science (49%) and maths (40%) were slightly lower. History and ICT had particularly low retention, though the number of participants teaching each was small; the historians were the most likely to move into other careers. Retention was thus generally high in the shortage subjects.

While the figures for the various groups were broadly consistent with the expectations earlier expressed, this was not always so at the level of the individual. Participants have changed their views over time. Some saw themselves as more likely to teach than they were when they joined the programme:

*It really has sort of totally altered my outlook on teaching and I can now see it as a very respectable career and something I’d be perfectly happy to do for the rest of my life if there weren’t other things I wanted to do as well, whereas before I would have seen it perhaps as a last resort.* (Cohort 1)

But many hoped to experience various different kinds of work in their lives, and still did not want to settle for a single career path. This was perhaps predictable, when we consider that the greatest attraction of the programme was identified by participants as being able to keep their career options open. On the final questionnaire we asked participants how definite their long-term plans were. Two-thirds of those responding said their plans were ‘fairly vague’, and a quarter ‘fairly definite’, with very few indicating either ‘absolutely definite’ or ‘no long-term plans’.

Those who had accepted jobs in other fields felt that the main way that Teach First had contributed was that they were able to use their Teach First experience on their CV and in interview. Far fewer identified specific aspects of Teach First that had been helpful. Some had received assistance with presenting their CVs, some had had useful advice from their coaches.

Some also felt that Teach First had changed their views about the sector in which they wished to work. One interviewee who had a traineeship in a bank said that he would not even have thought of banking before he joined Teach First, and that even if he had applied at that stage he would not have got the job because he had no idea how to make a successful application. In contrast two other interviewees had had definite career plans before they joined Teach First, and both have resumed these on leaving the programme: one had obtained a place on a graduate training scheme before joining Teach First but had deferred entry, and the other applied successfully to the firm he had always intended to apply to. Of these three, only the first seriously considered staying in teaching at any point in the two years.

We asked those moving into other employment sectors to rate a list of potential advantages of their new jobs in comparison with teaching: the most frequently identified major advantages were ‘better working conditions’ (64%); ‘more closely matches my talents and aptitudes’ (60%); ‘less frustration and stress’ (56%). Thirty-six percent considered that a major advantage of the new job was ‘more scope for creativity’, and 28% that it would have ‘higher pay’.

We asked all participants about their expected incomes in 2005-6. Figure 9 shows that those staying in teaching anticipated earning more, on average, than those taking up other careers. However, it is not possible to say what the long-term prospects for either group would be. Two of those taking up other careers had gained very well-paid jobs in the city and finance sector, shown as outliers on Figure 9.
4.4 The impact on the participants

For many participants, their experience through Teach First was a life-changing event. This was evidenced not simply in changing career plans, but also in their comments about their own personal development and their understanding of other people.

I think after this job, working with people is going to be a breeze. I have always worried that working with people would be difficult for me. Certainly when I was younger I was quite opinionated, though I am less vocal about my feelings now. I am definitely more tolerant and wary about what I say to whom and how you say it more importantly. And that is through talking to the kids and dealing with staff as well.

Some participants emphasised that this particular route into teaching had suited their learning styles and preferences:

Independence, early responsibility, the challenge element, just being forced to be stubborn about things and be determined rather than it being easy for you, I have liked all that I liked the fact that it was difficult. I think my teaching, although I think in the short-term it has suffered [from the challenging circumstances in the school], but I think in the long-term it has actually been quite good because I have been forced to write my own schemes of work and to learn very, very quickly and practically how to get things done and that sort of thing.

Many commented that they now have a better understanding of disadvantage:

I was quite a sheltered middle class girl. … Some of the problems these kids have blow your mind, and some of them actually come through and they leave it all behind and they go home, and what they have to deal with, it humbles you, it really really humbles you.

I think it’s always going to affect you in some way … I’ve changed so much in a year and you can see this, it’s not something you could ever forget about … I think it’s things like you put down on your CV, you know, you’re more confident, responsible, reliable, but I suppose outlook as well. … You realise it’s not the same for everyone … you realise there are so many external circumstances that can affect things. I mean it’s not fair, and you’ve
got to, definitely looking at in a political way, you want to make society a bit more of an equal place and fairer.

This broader understanding is an explicit part of Teach First’s aim:

We also need leaders in the social sector who are dedicated to addressing imbalances and injustices that cause poverty and have a particular concern for improving education in challenging schools. (Teach First website)

4.5 Future involvement with education and with Teach First

Part of the aspiration of Teach First is to create a network of alumni who will have a continued commitment to education in challenging schools. An alumni director has been appointed, and a network of ‘Teach First Ambassadors’ has been set up to carry this aspiration forward. In later questionnaires participants were asked about the ways in which they might maintain their commitment to challenging schools and to Teach First. Far more expected to keep in touch with their Teach First school than to contribute in other challenging schools, but the majority saw themselves as keeping in touch with the staff of the school rather than doing voluntary work with pupils. In interview some Cohort 1 participants commented that while they hoped to keep in touch with the school, they were aware that when they had moved on to new careers they were unlikely in reality to go back. Very few participants saw any likelihood of becoming a governor in their current school.

At the end of the two years, 42% of Cohort 1 participants thought they would definitely continue to have an active involvement in the Teach First alumni organisation. This included a much higher percentage of men than women. The proportion was rather lower in Cohort 2 at the end of their first year of the programme (26%).

4.6 Summary: outcomes

- Schools reported that Teach First teachers had a positive impact, delivering high quality lessons, undertaking extra-curricular activities and in some cases reinvigorating other staff.

- At the end of two years one third of the schools in which Cohort 1 participants were placed had retained half or more of their Teach First teachers; one third had retained less than half, and one third had not retained any. The schools with higher free school meals figures were less likely to retain Teach First teachers.

- After two years, the destinations of those who originally joined Cohort 1 were as follows:
  - 15% had withdrawn before completion of the two-year programme;
  - one third had been retained as teachers in their Teach First schools;
  - a further 9% were teaching in the UK, some having moved to other challenging schools;
  - one third had embarked on careers in other sectors;
  - the remainder were undecided, or were studying, travelling or teaching abroad.

- A higher proportion of the women had been retained in teaching, and intended to remain in the profession.
Those staying in teaching anticipated higher average earnings in 2005-6 than those entering other careers.

The participants themselves considered that they had developed as a result of the programme and that they had gained a better understanding of disadvantage.
5. Overview and wider benefits

In this report we have described the innovative aspects of the Teach First programme, and have considered how effective they have been from the perspectives of the various stakeholders, and in terms of impact on individuals and schools. We have identified good practice in relation to the various innovations. Thus far we have considered innovative practice in each separate element of the Teach First programme; in this section, we review how the programme has achieved its overall aims.

5.1 Overview of innovation in the Teach First programme

What is innovative about Teach First is the way that the whole programme has been constructed with distinctive aspirations in relation to educational inequality. So rather than considering each innovative element in turn, in this section our starting point is Teach First’s success in achieving these aspirations. We then review how this has been done, and how this differs from other ITT provision.

The key successes are:

- the recruitment into teaching of substantial numbers of graduates, who would not otherwise have become teachers, and who have good degrees from elite universities and generally outstanding personal qualities; and
- the short-term and long-term contribution to the staffing of challenging schools in disadvantaged areas, particularly in shortage subjects.

These two aspects of success cannot be separated: the opportunity to work in challenging schools has been key to the recruitment of ‘top’ graduates.

The strategies used to achieve these successes have been risky, and not without cost and pain to individuals involved in the programme. In this report we have set out the various difficulties, including for example, the participants’ workload and stress, and the schools’ anxieties about the weaker trainees and about the balance of costs and benefits to the schools. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that most of the schools feel that they have benefited, even in cases where Teach First teachers have left at the end of the two-year programme. The fact that 40% of those who completed the programme have stayed in Teach First schools for a third year is, in the perception of most schools, a bonus. Similarly, while the participants have at times expressed a variety of negative emotions about the programme, all those we have spoken to who have completed the programme were glad they have done it, and on the final Cohort 1 questionnaire almost 80% indicated that ‘choosing to work with Teach First was the best decision I ever made’. But those who have withdrawn have expressed very different perceptions, in many cases seeing their experience as damaging.

In analysing how Teach First has achieved success, and how this relates to other forms of ITT provision, we refer to the core themes in the experience of becoming a student teacher identified by Hobson and Malderez (2005; Malderez et al. 2005): identity, relationships, relevance and emotion. These were identified through the analysis of data from the first phase of the Becoming a Teacher project, a six-year longitudinal study which seeks to investigate teachers’ experiences of initial teacher preparation and of teaching, professional development and support during the first four years of teaching. The project has collected data from student teachers on seven different ITT routes including undergraduate, postgraduate and employment-based
routes. All the core themes identified in this project have some relevance in the
discussion of the ways in which Teach First can benefit teacher training as a whole,
but identity is the key theme for discussion here.

5.1.1 Identity

The *Becoming a Teacher* project data showed that there was ‘a preoccupation, on
student teachers’ parts, with the notion of teacher identity’ (Malderez et al. 2005: 8).
Two groups were distinguished. Some felt that they were ‘actualising an already
identified potential’; they perceived that they had the appropriate personal
characteristics and skills, as well as creativity and knowledge of their subject. Others
saw becoming a teacher as ‘a transformation of self in the endeavour to become, or
*change into*, a teacher’ (2005: 8, italics in the original). In this group, interviewees
talked about ‘dressing up as teachers’ and becoming members of the ‘club’ of
teachers.

In contrast, Teach First is seeking out people who do not see themselves as teachers,
and part of its strategy is to assure potential recruits that while they will teach for two
years, their identity is as future leaders in a wide variety of career sectors including
education. This identity is prestigious. From the outset, Teach First aimed to be a high
profile programme, and has presented itself in the media and in its recruitment
strategies as prestigious. Teach First also constructs the identity of the Teach First
teacher as having ‘kudos’ by praising the participants for joining the programme:

*The Teach First thing is really talked up … they go around ‘yes, Teach First teachers are
amazing, blah blah blah’ … Teach First puts you up on this pedestal.* (Cohort 2)

During the time they are teaching, there is an encouragement to perceive themselves
as Teach First teachers, who will have ‘high and demanding expectations of pupils’
and will ‘teach inspirationally’ (*Training Programme Handbook*, 2004-5). This
‘Teach First identity’ is fostered through the *esprit de corps* activities at the Summer
Institute. Many of the participants are excited by the vision:

*Their vision is in the right place. I’m proud to be part of it. Your first couple of weeks in
the school and it’s really tough you know, and just knowing you are part of this
programme, you’re doing it all together, you knew it was going to be high challenge.
That’s the beauty of it.* (Cohort 2)

Participants are encouraged to articulate how this vision impacts on their teaching. As
part of the QTS assessment process, Cohort 1 made presentations about having high
expectations to Cohort 2 participants at the Summer Institute in Canterbury. An
extract from the assignment brief is given below:

> With reference to three examples, demonstrate that you have had high expectations of
pupils and shown a commitment to raising educational achievement, and analyse the
impact of your strategies for realising these ambitions on the pupils concerned. The aim
of this assignment is for you to share with your peers on the Teach First programme, and
with the next cohort of Teach First trainees, some evidence of the outcomes arising from
your commitment to high expectations of pupils. Our particular reason for setting this
assignment is the importance of high expectations in Teach First values. We hope that
you and your peers will be able to engage in informed discussion about successes and
problems in setting and achieving high expectations, and that the next cohort’s work can
be informed by your understandings from the outset. (*Training Programme Handbook,*
2004-5)

This assignment clearly links the vision and values of Teach First with the QTS
Standards. We observed a number of these presentations. In the majority of these, the
values and the Standards were clearly demonstrated. The vision with which Teach First inspires and motivates participants is the same vision as the one required for all teachers. What Teach First has done, however, is to make this a central focus of the programme. This has undoubtedly had an impact in the approach that Teach First participants have had to teaching, and has been recognised by schools, as demonstrated by the comments in Section 4.1 of this report. In interviews some participants talked about the Teach First vision or ethos. The extracts below from interviews with Cohort 2 participants illustrate both the strengths and the dangers of this ethos:

*I think the important thing about Teach First is just its vision. … Their vision is that we will be excellent inspiring teachers and that’s great you know. Whereas normal teachers might not even have that vision for themselves.* (Cohort 2)

*So my approach, or what I think is the Teach First approach, is to think outside the box. As a maths teacher I think it’s traditionally got a very poor reputation as a subject, so therefore as a cohort I think we’re always trying to think of ways to make maths as a subject more interesting, more appealing, and to lose or shed that tag of being a boring subject. … So that’s a massive ethos that I think we carry, and we put that into the way we plan and deliver our lessons. So I think we’re striving to come up with ideas, striving to inject some colour into it, striving to inject some humour and some personality into it perhaps. Maybe that’s just me, but I think that’s really the Teach First ethos. In a way we feel like we’re, this is going to sound ridiculous, we feel like we’re saviours or fire fighters going in there to kind of save these classes that are used to having crappy teachers who aren’t interested or leave after six months.* (Cohort 2)

While the Teach First ethos and identity plays a key role in the way participants develop into imaginative and effective teachers, it also potentially belittles ‘normal teachers’, as the quotes above illustrate. This sentiment was repeated in many interviews. For example,

*You obviously get very intelligent people doing PGCEs, but they are few and far between aren’t they?* (Cohort 2)

This is reflected in the antagonism that the Teach First participants have encountered in some schools, and in teachers’ comments:

*There is a feeling that it does undermine existing staff …. The programme basically says that they [Teach First trainees] are supposed to be excellent at what they are doing, that they will provide an elite teaching force in a very short space of time, almost like a storm trooper type model. … Are we saying that existing teachers just basically aren’t good enough, that we need people coming in with very good qualifications who can just pick up the job in a few weeks and show us how it’s done, and turn schools round?* (Subject mentor)

Teachers believed that this situation arose because of the ‘way they [trainees] are taught to perceive themselves, and the things they are told about existing staff as they come into the school’. While we saw no evidence that Teach First trainees are explicitly told that other teachers are not doing a good job, this perception seems to be built into the Teach First message, and central to the recruitment strategy, in that potential applicants are told that they will change schools:

*By joining Teach First you will not only become part of a remarkable story that is changing the face of education and helping thousands of pupils, but you will mark yourself out as a cut above the rest.* (Teach First website)
They will go ‘beyond what is typically required to achieve classroom success’, and will ‘make a difference … to their school as a whole’ (Teach First website).

We found through our surveys, that Teach First participants found the quality of teaching and pastoral care in schools to be better than they expected, while the quality of resources and the attainment level of pupils were worse; thus their expectations had been that teachers would be poor. Many of the interviewees differentiated themselves from ‘normal teachers’. One said:

*I like the teaching but I don’t want to be dealing with teachers. … Teachers whinge a lot and complain a lot. They talk about their job a lot … they have that union mentality.*

(Cohort 2)

There is no doubt that many Teach First participants still felt, even after two years, that it was socially difficult to admit to being a teacher – in their view, acknowledging this tends to both kill conversation and label oneself as boring. They feel they have to refer to their university background or to the Teach First programme to be seen as interesting and valuable people.

But while some participants differentiated themselves from ‘normal’ teachers, a number of others explicitly rejected the suggestion that Teach First teachers are better than other teachers:

*It’s from the way the Teach First scheme is sold, you know, ‘we’re only picking the most amazing, and what we’re doing is absolutely amazing’. But I think what’s actually more amazing are the people who have chosen to dedicate their lives to teaching in schools like this, and there are a lot of them around.*

(Cohort 2)

One result of all this is that some participants have explicitly rejected the Teach First message and identity:

*I’m no better than any of the best teachers here who are magnificent and give up their time and have great ideas and are doing amazing things, so I don’t like to see myself as a Teach First teacher, I think I’d like to see myself as just a teacher, having come from a different way in.*

(Cohort 2)

*I’m a newly qualified teacher in this school full stop, and I’m learning. I just don’t feel like I have got anything to do with Teach First any more really. … I want to be a teacher not a Teach First teacher – I don’t want to be seen under that heading any more.*

(Cohort 1)

The last participant quoted was among the group who did not take Foundations of Leadership, and who want to make a long-term career in teaching. In this case, it seemed that the participant could not (or did not want to) simultaneously maintain the two identities, ‘Teach First’ and ‘teacher’. Others considered that there was a gradual transition to a teacher identity over the two years. And some shared concerns about the notion that Teach First teachers are better than ‘normal’ teachers, but did not necessarily reject the Teach First identity. They commented, for example, that they see themselves as ‘normal’ teachers in school, but ‘Teach First’ when they attend events.

While Teach First’s recruitment strategy has been enormously effective in recruiting some very high quality graduates who would not otherwise have become teachers, the strategy of attracting people into teaching by constructing an identity distinct from that of a ‘normal’ teacher is clearly not one that is available to ITT as a whole. The focus has to be rather on making the identity of teacher one that is desirable. It remains to be seen how far Teach First is doing this.
But another issue for policy in teacher training as a whole that arises from this discussion of identity is the extent to which it is desirable or possible to foster groups with different identities in teacher training. The Fast Track route into teaching did this, fostering an identity of future school leader among the trainees on the route. This contrast with ‘normal teacher’ identity is even more marked on the Teach First route, in that many of the participants never see themselves as teachers at all, because they view Teach First as a graduate programme that precedes another career.

*I feel like I’m an impostor because I know I’m not going to be a teacher for ever.* (Cohort 2)

This contrasts to those described by Hobson and Malderez who talked about joining ‘the club’ of teachers.

The remodelling of the school workforce and the *Every Child Matters* agenda have created a diverse school workforce in which teachers work in multi-professional teams, and the restructuring of career pathways in teaching have also led to greater diversity within the teaching profession itself, with some moving towards leadership and others to become Advanced Skills Teachers. The Teach First programme prompts the question, how much further is it desirable or useful to create diverse groups of teachers who perceive themselves as distinctive?

A particular difficulty is that creating distinctive group identities so easily results in one group seeing itself as superior to another. Some of the comments from Teach First participants (including, for example, the references quoted above to ‘normal teachers’ lacking vision, to ‘crappy teachers’, and to there being few very intelligent PGCE students) indicate an assumption of superiority. A similar effect was observed in the evaluation of the science enhancement programme at King’s College, London (SEPAK) where those selected to follow the enhanced programme formed a strong group identity, and identified themselves and their training as superior to other trainees (Hutchings and Smart, 2005).

In fostering the Teach First identity, a key factor is that the programme lasts two years. This is a central appeal in the recruitment of graduates who would not otherwise have become teachers. It is also a short enough period to allow the participants to continue to see themselves as a group distinct from other teachers. This short time span has obviously impacted on the way that initial teacher training is provided for this group. An employment-based route was necessary, but, as the target group were new graduates who had spent very little time in school, an introductory course was desirable.

The idea that teaching should only form a part of the career is not new: Ralph Tabberer, Chief Executive of the TTA was quoted as saying ‘We need to get away from the idea that teaching is a job for life. There might be young teachers who come into the profession for ten years, and then move on to another career’ (BBC, 2000). This is not something that is unique to teaching but is rather a part of the way that the notion of career is now being constructed. Teach First has been particularly successful in emphasising that the skills of teaching are transferable. This is something that the TDA and ITT providers might use in recruitment. The senior managers from leading providers in the focus group we held said that, while they do not think that they portray teaching as a career for life, they give limited emphasis to the transferability of the skills acquired, or the possibility of entering teaching as a short-term option. Similarly, Hobson and Malderez (2005), in the *Becoming a Teacher* research, do not
indicate that the teachers they studied expected to gain transferable skills through learning to teach.

While employment-based ITT routes have proved very successful in attracting people into teaching from other employment sectors, the Teach First approach is unique in that the trainees are all taking a full teaching role; they are not extra to the staff complement. This approach allows people to come into teaching for a very short period – only two years – and still make a useful contribution. (However, the workload involved in this approach may not be acceptable for all trainees, particularly those with family or other responsibilities.) This raises another for policy-makers: in terms of the balance between the costs of training and the benefits to the school workforce, what is the shortest time it is desirable or necessary for recruits to stay in teaching?

There are considerable costs to schools in terms of the staff time that has to be allocated to support such trainees, and perhaps because these are schools facing challenges, some Teach First participants have not had the support to which they were entitled. But, while ensuring that support is provided has been a particular challenge in the schools used by the Teach First programme, it does not seem to be such an issue in most forms of teacher training (Hobson and Malderez, 2005).

The focus on challenging schools is central to the Teach First programme and the Teach First teacher identity. We have described how this is framed in terms of being the lone hero, the fire-fighter, the saviour or the storm-trooper. The idea of creating an identity based around teaching in challenging schools or disadvantaged areas is found in some other initiatives. For example, in Bristol the universities and the local authority are collaborating to create the Bristol Educated Student Teacher (BEST) – an initiative partly designed to raise awareness of the opportunity that working in an urban context offers. This will include a retention strategy with a continuum of training through the NQT year. It will be interesting to see how far this scheme succeeds in making urban teaching a desirable option, and whether the ‘BEST identity’ remains beyond the training period. The notion of training teachers specifically to work in urban and disadvantaged areas is an interesting one; some Teach First participants argued that they would have benefited from spending time teaching in a less challenging context because it was difficult for them to know what expectations were reasonable.

In a rather different way, the academies are beginning to create a group of teachers with a particular identity, and as numbers increase, and groups of academies emerge that have the same sponsor, this may happen more explicitly. But to date the academies have not created a training route to foster this identity; however, it is evident that many of the academies in London have seen Teach First as fulfilling this role, and they have employed very large groups of Teach First participants. One in particular must now have almost twenty Teach First trainees and teachers on the staff. One academy headteacher argued that Teach First and academies share values, and said that this is a ‘convenient relationship’.

A final consideration in relation to identity is the creation of a network of people who understand and care about disadvantage, and continue to support the Teach First mission in whatever field they may be working. This is an important aspect of the programme, and a very positive aspiration. It is far too early as yet to see how this works out in practice. One slight reservation is that those who see ‘normal’ teachers as not very good are in the group moving into other professions. It would be a pity if
the effect of the year in Teach First was that some alumni denigrate the competence and efforts of teachers in challenging schools.

5.1.2 Relationships

The data for the *Becoming a Teacher* project showed the central role of relationships in the experience of training as a teacher (Hobson and Malderez, 2005). The most important relationships were those with pupils, mentors and teachers. Other relationships discussed include those with family members. Fellow trainees are only briefly touched on. This contrasts with the Teach First programme where the other participants were identified as the main source of support in our questionnaires. This relates again to the aspiration to create a Teach First identity discussed above. *Esprit de corps* activities are provided to foster these relationships, and participants are placed in groups in schools so that they can continue to support each other.

The idea of placing students in groups is one that is common to many providers, particularly in the primary sector. It was a particularly valuable aspect of SEPAK (the Science Enhancement Programme at Kings’ College), in which physical scientists and biological scientists were paired in schools (Hutchings and Smart, 2005). However, providers have found that it has become harder to achieve as the length of school placements has increased, and the role of the school in training has increased. Schools do not always want to take on more than one trainee. This has also been an issue for Teach First, particularly as the schools have to pay the trainees in this case.

Nevertheless, Teach First has demonstrated very clearly the importance of the peer group as a source of support and as a way of maintaining the Teach First vision of the best way to teach. This is something that could perhaps be more strongly fostered on other ITT routes.

Another aspect of the Teach First emphasis on *esprit de corps* is the relationship of one cohort to another. When Cohort 3 attended the Summer Institute in July, some Cohort 1 participants were involved in the teaching, and Cohort 2 participants joined them when they returned to Canterbury for the QTS assessment. Cohort 2 participants who were placed in schools with those from Cohort 1 identified them as a key source of support and in some cases informal mentoring. The way in which young Teach First teachers are learning from others who have gone through the similar experiences seems something that could be encouraged on other routes. Generally the tutors in teacher training are considerably older than those they teach, and it may be that some messages will be better received from those of a more similar age and experience level.

In the same way, Teach First is successfully using current participants in recruiting new applicants. Other ITT providers and the TDA might consider making more use of trainees and recently qualified teachers in this way.

5.1.3 Relevance

This third theme identified by Hobson and Malderez refers to trainees’ perceptions of the relevance (or not) of ‘theory’, which we discussed earlier. Malderez *et al.* argue that the *Becoming a Teacher* data support literature on stages of teacher development which suggests that the focus of beginner teachers’ concerns change over time (e.g. Fuller and Brown, 1975; Kagan, 1992; Capel, 2001; Conway and Clark, 2003). This literature argues that initial concern is with acceptance in the school community, performance as a teacher and pupil behaviour. It is only later that the focus can shift to
pupil learning (which is the main focus of such ‘theory’ as is taught). Malderez et al. therefore suggest that there is a need to rethink ‘the sequencing of such content in relation to trainees’ school experiences’ (2005: 27). The Teach First programme is unusual in the extent to which the training programme is delivered before the trainees start teaching. We have shown that many participants valued the practical aspects of the Summer Institute programme that had direct implications for coping in school, but that before they started work in school, the majority found the theoretical aspects less useful. Some did not recognise the value of ‘theory’ until they had been teaching for periods varying from a few months to more than a year. This fits in with the data from the Becoming a Teacher study. While there are clearly timing issues, it might be worth considering holding half-term training to include such issues as learning theories and learning styles, and discussions about equality issues. The Education conference might contribute to this, though the sessions we observed were much more focused on practical issues. The plans to develop a Masters degree linked to the Teach First programme may be very useful in this respect.

A second issue relating to relevance is the question raised by some participants, of how much of conventional teacher training is relevant to those who intend to teach for only two years. Obviously Teach First hopes that some participants will remain in teaching, so a comprehensive training is needed. However, if the trend to have work in a variety of careers over the course of a lifetime continues, then a broader policy question arises of what sort of professional knowledge is needed by those spending only a short time in a career.

5.1.4 Emotion
The final theme identified by Hobson and Malderez is emotion. They found that becoming a teacher is a highly emotional experience, and trace how this has been a theme of a number of studies of trainee teachers. For example, Hayes (2003) found that emotions can either inhibit teachers if their fears about coping are stronger than their motivation to teach, or can motivate, where they experience affirmation from others. Stephenson (1995) found that the quality of trainees’ school-based experiences depended principally on their emotional condition, which was in itself related to the quality of the mentoring process. Malderez et al. (2005) argue, drawing on these studies and on the Becoming a Teacher data, that initial teacher training needs to take more account of the emotional aspects of becoming a teacher, and to ensure that they provide effective support.

The Teach First programme is a particularly emotionally charged process for participants, probably to a higher degree than other forms of teacher training. They are expected to take on a great deal of responsibility in difficult circumstances. Some aspects of the programme are designed to provide emotional support. The Summer Institute involves a great deal of morale-boosting, but also an acknowledgement that the training year is inevitably a mix of highs and ‘valleys of death’ (a phrase used by Teach First staff, and adopted by participants). The training provider offers trainees an above average level of support in terms of tutor visits, in addition to trying to ensure that the schools provide sufficient support, which has proved to be difficult in some of the challenging schools used. The placement of participants in groups, and the efforts to build an esprit de corps also contribute to the net of emotional support. We have shown how this can be effective in supporting those who are feeling discouraged.
5.2 Summary: how ITT as a whole might benefit

This evaluation has identified elements of good practice in the Teach First programme. Many of these can also be found in other forms of teacher training. In this final section we review the good practice that has been identified, and consider the extent to which it is innovative and the potential for transfer to other forms of ITT. However, without a thorough survey of existing practice it is impossible to know to what extent other ITT providers already have similar practices in place.

The section concludes by identifying wider questions that have been raised through the evaluation.

5.2.1 Good practice in the Teach First programme

A number of elements of good practice have been identified in this report.

1. The emphasis in recruitment on the transferable skills developed through teaching. This has contributed to Teach First’s success in recruiting a group of people who would not otherwise have become teachers.

2. The use of Teach First participants in recruitment. Teach First participants have spoken at recruitment events and have been used in promotional materials. They have been useful ambassadors for the programme, because they are young and they can speak from personal experience.

3. The use of clearly specified competencies in selection. In the focus group of providers, we found that Fast Track providers also have a selection process based on competencies and using professional recruiters. However, some other providers acknowledged that their procedures were more ‘impressionistic’, but they felt that the greater involvement of teachers in the decision-making process was an important way of avoiding bad decisions.

4. The on-line subject knowledge audit. Subject knowledge audits are widely used by ITT providers. The TTA evaluation of subject knowledge booster courses (Brunel University, 2005) states that the providers in that evaluation all had some sort of audit, and 80% of the subject knowledge booster courses made systematic use of audit and target-setting to support the development of participants’ subject knowledge. We cannot tell from this how many used audits other than in the context of booster courses, though this would obviously be a useful practice.

5. In the context of an employment-based route, the initial training provided at the Summer Institute. We are not aware of other employment-based courses that have an introductory programme; this may be an issue of funding. In our focus group of ITT providers, it was argued that GTP trainees often get a large amount of total input over the year in twilight sessions.

6. The strong esprit de corps developed among participants. Most teacher training courses try to develop a strong group identity, and to encourage trainees to support each other. Teach First perhaps does so to a greater extent in that it is developing a group identity distinct from that of other teachers.

7. The strong and continued focus on high expectations.
This has been a crucial element of the programme; the Teach First vision and the high expectations that Teach First and CCCUC have had of participants, together with the strong *esprit de corps*, have led participants to continually strive to improve their teaching and to a high level of professional behaviour. The notion of high expectations is explicit in the QTS standards, but the Teach First programme has made this central.

8. The reflective journal used by trainees working in schools.

Participants have found the Journal to be very helpful in structuring their reflections. The Journal was developed from one in use at CCCUC, and thus is not an innovative feature of Teach First.

9. The strong support structures, including peer group support facilitated by the placement of groups of trainees in schools.

All ITT programmes support students. In the context of Teach First, it was particularly important to do this well because of the challenge of the schools that they are working in. It has not been easy to ensure that all these schools provide a consistent level of support, and this has made peer group support assume greater importance than it has in many programmes.

10. The development of relationships between cohorts, such that those who are in their second and third years offer advice and support to first years.

While this may happen informally in schools, we do not know whether any other ITT programmes use a structured approach through which those in their NQT year return to work with the subsequent cohort of trainees.

11. The continued emphasis on the development of transferable skills in the leadership elements of the programme.

In the context of Teach First, where many of the participants expect to move into other careers at some stage, the leadership elements of the programme have been useful in identifying and building on the skills that participants are developing through their work in school. The emphasis on leadership skills should also be of value in the development of future school leaders, though it is too early to assess this. The reluctance of some teachers to move from the classroom to leadership positions appears to relate in part to the fact that they see teaching and leadership as distinct activities, whereas the Teach First approach is to show how they are intrinsically linked.

12. The continuity from training to induction year.

On Teach First, the continuity from training year to induction year involves teaching in the same school. This has benefits in terms of knowing the ethos, expectations, staff and pupils, and results in considerable confidence on the part of Teach First NQTs. On other programmes, providers are developing continuity in terms of professional development activities by creating MTeach degrees that build on the PGCE. This type of continuity is missing from the Teach First programme, in that participants generally experienced very limited professional development activity in the induction year. However, a Masters programme is currently being developed for the Teach First programme.

13. The consistent efforts to improve communication and develop the partnership with schools.
This is of central importance for any partnership. It has perhaps been more difficult in the context of the Teach First programme, because school staff tend to be preoccupied with the challenges that face them, and the programme is rather different from other ITT programmes. Thus greater than normal efforts have been needed to make the partnership work.

5.2.2 Broader questions raised by the evaluation

The evaluation has also raised a number of questions relating to current ITT policy and practice. The first two arise directly from the good practice identified above, but are perhaps more appropriately raised in the context of TDA recruitment activities than those of individual providers.

- Do the TDA and providers currently give sufficient emphasis to transferable skills, either in attracting people into the profession, or in the training provided?
- Could young teachers be effectively used as ambassadors for the profession and as peer tutors?

The third question is one that has also been raised in the Becoming a Teacher research:

- At what point in teacher training and professional development activity are trainees and teachers most receptive to theoretical insights about, for example, the nature of teaching and learning? How could teacher training courses best enable such ideas to have a maximum impact?

The development of Masters programmes spanning the training and induction offers an opportunity to re-think when various ideas can most usefully be introduced.

The evaluation has indicated that in many ways the particular aspirations and strategies of the Teach First programme are unique. It aims to attract people into teaching for a short period only (though it is hoped that some will remain in the long-term), and focuses on the needs of challenging schools. It also aims to attract people who would not otherwise have entered teaching. In order to achieve these aims, Teach First has created a specific ‘Teach First identity’ which is prestigious, and is built on the Teach First vision of high expectations and inspirational teaching. But it also potentially positions the ‘normal’ teacher as less valuable. These rather different aspirations of the Teach First programme raise a number of issues relating to conceptions of teacher training, and to national policies:

- To what extent is it desirable to train some teachers specifically to work in challenging schools?
- Are there any additional ways in which teacher training could make provision for those who want to spend only a very short period (say, one to three years) of their career in teaching?
- Should the teaching profession aim to have a single professional teacher identity, or should it embrace distinct groups with differing identities? What are the advantages and dangers of encouraging the latter?

The Teach First programme has emerged from thinking outside the existing frameworks for teacher training. It seems important that in reviewing what can be learned from this experience, the evaluation should highlight broader issues that go beyond current practice for consideration by policy makers and providers in the ITT community.
References


Brunel University (2205) Evaluation of the Teacher Training Agency Subject Knowledge Booster Course Programme, Second annual report, Summary of key findings. Teacher Training Agency.


**Websites**
Canterbury Christ Church University, www.canterbury.ac.uk
Teach First, www.teachfirst.org.uk