

SCORE response to Education Committee inquiry into School Direct Recruitment 2013-14 – deadline Monday 8 July

SCORE comments on the administration of the application process for School Direct teacher training places to start in the academic year 2013/14.

- SCORE is a partnership of organisations, which aims to improve science education in UK schools and colleges by supporting the development and implementation of effective education policy. The partnership is chaired by Professor Julia Buckingham and comprises the Association for Science Education, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology.

Executive summary

- SCORE is concerned that the known shortfall in PGCE recruitment (as provided by GTTR) will not be made up by School Direct recruitment. As a result last years' recruitment figures, particularly in shortage subjects, will not be matched. These concerns have been heightened by the release of Professor John Howson's data on ITT application figures¹.
- On Friday 28 June 2013, SCORE submitted a response to NCTL consultation on 'Pre-ITT Knowledge Enhancement – proposal for 2013/14 and beyond'² and is referring the Education Select Committee to this for information. SCORE proposes the following questions on recruitment for the Education Select Committee to consider further.

SCORE questions

With increased teacher trainee recruitment at a local level, through individual schools, how does the NCTL propose to maintain a central, national strategy and overview of teacher recruitment across the country?

Concerns:

- With no central application system this year, there has been no national data to monitor recruitment, leading to a loss of clarity on current trends and difficulty in planning and addressing known shortfalls in subjects during the recruitment period.
- It will be difficult to manage national targets (or demonstrate that national targets are being met) with so many providers recruiting on a small scale. Currently, the government is able to set a national target for each subject and allocate this to providers; now that School Direct providers apply for places rather than receive allocations, localised targets may not meet national requirements. Many School Direct providers will be looking for just one recruit (which they will either get or not). And some providers will not apply for places every year. There is no mechanism for ensuring that a multitude (thousands) of local needs will combine to satisfy the national need.

¹ For reference see: 'New training plan risks teacher shortage, study warns'; BBC news online, 2 July 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-23134979> and [Shortage of 5,000 trainee teachers](#); The Sunday Times, 30 June 2013 (paywall)

² SCORE RESPONSE to National College for Teaching and Leadership consultation on '[Pre-ITT Knowledge Enhancement – proposal for 2013/14 and beyond](#)'

In what ways does the NCTL propose this new method of recruitment to be cost-efficient for schools?

Concern:

- Recruitment and provisioning of teacher training incur costs that are currently met by providers consolidating and coordinating applications - thereby achieving economies of scale. Although school alliances may be able to combine recruitment costs to an extent, there is a possibility that schools will recruit one trainee per subject, per school which is still likely to incur comparatively high costs to those of other ITT providers.

How can the NCTL ensure that those teachers responsible for recruitment in 2013 have experience in recruitment for training?

Concern:

- Changes have been introduced rapidly, schools are experienced in recruiting qualified teachers but there is no guarantee that all schools have sufficient recruitment expertise to be able to recruit trainees and graduates.
- Feedback from SD alliances this year has been that they have not recruited because they considered the quality of the applicants to be low. However, it is likely that, from their experience as recruiters of teachers, they were looking for someone who was ready to teach rather than someone who was ready to be trained to teach.

Have schools been recruiting to fill an existing teaching vacancy in their alliance? Is there any evidence that schools are recruiting for reasons other than their own staffing needs?

Concern:

- The system is not geared up to encourage schools to recruit to satisfy a national need. There is no real incentive for a school to manage the training of a teacher who might then go and work at another school – outside the alliance.
- School Direct graduates may be expected to arrive with the competencies of a fully trained teacher and will not be prepared for the experience. This could lead to a negative experience for the trainees, pupils and the teacher trainers.

How many Physics with Maths places were allocated to SD providers? And how will NCTL encourage schools to offer Physics with Maths?

Concern:

- There is a shortage of physics teachers in schools across the country. In the last two years the PGCE Physics with Maths training programme encouraged more physics and engineering graduates to enter teaching – by allowing them to work to their strengths and interests. We know that it has been hard for PGCE providers to find placements for these students (schools cite timetabling difficulties as a barrier to providing placements); however, the students were, at least, able to get onto a course. We are concerned that there are fewer opportunities to train in Physics with Maths through School Direct because it is the schools who lead on the recruitment process and they only consider recruiting people to physics with other sciences.