



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

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Dear Professor Buckingham

Thank you for your letter of 8 August 2013 to the Secretary of State about School Direct. This has been passed to me for reply.

I note your concerns about changes to initial teacher training (ITT) and your recognition of the government's commitment to attracting high quality teachers in physics and chemistry into the profession. I can assure you that the current ITT reforms, including the introduction of School Direct, are aimed at further raising the quality and status of teachers.

School Direct has been introduced in response to a demand from schools to have more involvement in leading and managing initial teacher training (ITT). This is reflected in the strong interest received from schools for places in the academic year 2013/14, with over 9,500 places requested. Registrations for places for 2014/15 to date suggest demand will be even greater next year.

One aspect of this is that School Direct will enable groups of schools to make decisions based on demand at a local level, recruiting to subjects where they need teachers most. Nevertheless, the National College of Teaching & Leadership (NCTL) will continue to be responsible for the overall management of ITT places in England and the overall supply of teachers. As such, it is closely monitoring the subject and geographical patterns of both allocations and recruitment to places. In fact, the NCTL will consider regional supply issues in determining where places are allocated in future academic years.

In terms of sustainability, the NCTL is encouraging schools to form larger partnerships: for example, building on Teaching School Alliances and academy chains. Such alliances have the potential to form the backbone of a more stable demand for School Direct training, as larger alliances will be better able to forecast the number of places they will need, develop continuity in subject specific training and bring repeat business to providers.

With reference to ensuring high quality provision, as part of the allocations criteria for School Direct places, the NCTL considers the Ofsted rating of the lead school, and encourages schools that are not outstanding to team up with outstanding schools. However, ITT providers remain accountable to Ofsted for all the training which they work with schools to deliver, including School Direct, and the quality of School Direct provision will be judged in the same

way. School Direct programmes will, for example, need to meet the ITT requirement that each trainee should teach in at least two schools.

The Ofsted Initial Teacher Education (ITE) framework, which came into effect in September 2012, puts much more emphasis on how providers work in partnership with schools, and schools that are part of an ITT partnership will be sampled as part of each inspection. Ofsted inspects all types of accredited ITT providers in exactly the same way. If a school is also an ITT provider in its own right, it will be subject to an Ofsted ITE inspection as well as an Ofsted Section 5 inspection.

Universities continue to make an important contribution to the provision of high quality teacher training and 75 per cent of School Direct places this year went to schools working in partnership with a university provider. Data collected by the NCTL indicates that the majority of School Direct programmes include the academic award of a Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). Schools and universities themselves are best placed to realise the benefits that comes from being part of a community of practice, in relation to both subject and age range, and to utilise the expertise that education departments can bring.

In this context, it is important for universities to develop a new approach to their role, in which they respond to the demands of school partnerships and in which schools and universities negotiate appropriate arrangements for the expertise they can provide. Several universities have already responded to this challenge, and seen their overall number of training places increase because schools want to work with them.

We recognise that we have always faced a challenge in recruiting high quality trainee teachers in science subjects, and physics in particular. NCTL will therefore continue to accord these subjects priority status, using the bursary structure and our prestigious scholarship programme to attract applicants with the best degrees and who have the potential to become outstanding teachers. Additionally, the Triple Science Support Programme (which is supported by members of SCORE such as the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology) will continue to engage appropriate schools and provide support in the form of peer support and network relationships to help them achieve their triple science objectives.

The NCTL has already undertaken to review the SKE programme to ensure that it remains effective and achieves value for money as we move into a new, school-led ITT landscape. However, we will balance the necessary changes with the need to maintain the supply of sufficient high-quality trainee teachers into the classroom, especially in subjects where they are needed most.

Like all Government Departments, the Department for Education is required regularly to review the value for money and relative cost of implementing its policies, as part of the public spending review process. We will evaluate the success of School Direct on the quality of trainees it recruits; the percentage of recruits awarded Qualified Teacher Status; the early employment rates of

those awarded Qualified Teacher Status; and their longer term retention rates. These figures will come from the Performance Profiles data and School Workforce Census both of which are published. The NCTL has also asked Ofsted to consider a survey inspection of School Direct in 2014/15. This and any other arrangements for 2014/15 will be subject to further discussion between the NCTL and Ofsted.

You will probably be aware that this year's School Direct applications portal was an interim solution, pending the development of the UCAS Teacher Training application system. This will launch in November this year. We are confident that the UCAS system will provide a more efficient system for both applicants and schools/providers to manage applications across postgraduate, School Centred ITT and School Direct provision. It will also provide a single source of information to enable recruitment trends to be monitored across the year.

We welcome SCORE's commitment to supporting schools' greater involvement in ITT and your continuing efforts in supporting the recruitment of high quality science teachers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JOHN CARR', is written over a horizontal red line. A vertical black line is positioned to the left of the signature.

John Carr
Deputy Director
Quality and Priorities