

Teach Primary

**Improving the status and quality of primary
school teaching**

June 2009

FOREWORD

In this government's first term, there was a strong focus on primary education. The literacy and numeracy strategies saw improvements in the teaching of the basic subjects. But once those initial improvements had been achieved, the government turned its attention to secondary schools. Primary test results stalled. There was little attention – aside from Jim Rose's 2005 report on phonics – paid to the quality of teaching for younger pupils.

Although there have subsequently been reviews of the curriculum and further endeavours to introduce catch-up programmes in the basics, there has been too little systematic attention paid to these formative years of a child's development. And while there are a number of exciting initiatives to attract the brightest and best to teach in our secondary schools, primary schools and their teachers risk being treated as the poorer cousins of the sector.

Yet without a good primary education, it is far more difficult to achieve well in secondary school and to hope to go on to further and higher education. Extensive international and national evidence tells us that, while what children learn is very important, how they are taught and by whom is decisive in maximising progress and achievement, particularly for those from poorer backgrounds.¹

So this paper seeks to put a spotlight on the critical importance of recruiting the best men and women in the country to teach our primary-aged children.

At this time of constrained spending, it is not necessarily about increasing the numbers of primary school teachers overall – although there is an argument that this should be a priority too. Rather, this paper is about changing the profile of primary teaching further so that it is not only a strong career option for new graduates, but it is something that the highest calibre graduates and professionals consider for at least a part of their working lives. It is about recognising that successful training programmes in secondary schools, particularly Teach First, should be equally available in primary schools. And it is most importantly about the shared aim of the Sutton Trust and the National Education Trust - to see effective primary education reaching *all* our children, including those in most need.

We hope this contribution to the debate will prompt policy-makers, schools and those responsible for teacher training to challenge established conventions and to find new and exciting routes into teaching – for the benefit of current and future generations of young learners.

¹ See, in particular, Barber, M and Moushed, M *How the world's best performing school systems come out on top* (McKinsey, London, 2007).

Both Trusts would like to thank Conor Ryan for writing this paper and the experts from academia and the teacher training world who commented on the proposals.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summary recommendations

- **A ‘Teach Primary’ initiative should be established to raise the profile and status of primary school teaching. This should include new and existing employment-based routes into the profession, specifically:**
 - **Teach First should be extended to primary schools**
 - **More Graduate Teacher Training places should be made available for those wishing to become primary teachers**
 - **Other work-based opportunities should be opened to new graduates wanting to enter the primary sector**
- **There should be a focus on recruiting the best teachers into the most challenging schools through the use of financial incentives, such as golden handcuffs and higher salaries**
- **Consortia of successful primary schools should be able to become training schools, allowing the best schools to instruct the next generation of teachers**
- **Primary teaching should develop a more attractive career structure, particularly by allowing ambitious teachers to lead groups of primary schools as executive heads**
- **Advertising should not hide the challenges of primary teaching - the chance to make a difference in a difficult environment is attractive to many high-flying graduates and career-switchers.**

1. Primary education is key to a child’s development. What children learn in primary schools will stay with them all their lives. Recent government reports by Sir Jim Rose have emphasised the importance of a more structured approach to the teaching of reading and a more imaginative curriculum in primary schools. But there is also evidence that, despite improvements in literacy and numeracy, too many pupils, particularly those from poorer homes, are moving on to secondary school without having acquired the basics.

2. International studies have shown that the quality of teaching is central to the quality of schools. So it is particularly important that primary schools are able to attract high calibre graduates and that the best teachers are in the schools serving the most challenging communities.

3. There has been a growth in employment-based routes into teaching in the last decade. The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) offers graduates the chance to train in schools with a salary of £14,200 a year, though there are more secondary than primary places available. Teach First has helped nearly 1000 top graduates teach in inner city secondary schools, initially for two years, and often for longer.

4. Primary teaching faces three big challenges if it is to provide the excellent education that children need at this crucial stage in their lives.

- **We need more good primary teachers, particularly in the most challenging schools.** Although more teachers have good degrees, the change merely reflects changes in the proportion of all graduates with such degrees. And despite improvements in primary teaching, Ofsted has said that too many primary teachers lack subject expertise and have low subject expectations as a result.
- **We need more men to become primary teachers.** Only 16 per cent of primary teachers are male. Yet many boys, whose results are poorer than girls, say they would work harder and behave better if they had more male teachers.
- **We need to raise the status of primary teaching.** An important reason why primary teaching may not be as attractive as secondary teaching is not only that it pays less, particularly in leadership positions, but that it is perceived as having a less challenging career structure.

5. Ofsted reports the quality of in-school teacher training as being as good as that offered on university-based courses. Given the potential attractiveness of such routes to good graduates, it would make sense to extend access to such routes in primary school. Policy Exchange and the National Education Trust have proposed that the existing employment-based routes including GTP and SCITT should be developed into a Teach Now programme that is available to graduates and professionals looking to change jobs, offering them the chance to earn while they train. This would see a greater proportion of initial teacher training offered in primary schools.

6. We have three recommendations to improve access to employment-based routes. **More GTP places should be available for those wishing to become primary teachers.** At the same time, as the GTP tends to focus on more mature entrants, **other employment-based opportunities should be opened to new graduates.** And the best graduates should have the chance to join the successful Teach First programme, building on the current small pilot. **Teach First should be extended to primary schools** with as many places available over time as in secondary schools. Work-based routes should be re-packaged under a single over-arching programme to enhance clarity and status. **A 'Teach Primary' brand could cover all programmes aimed at recruiting talented graduates and career switchers into primary schools, with a particular emphasis on recruiting the best graduates to schools in challenging circumstances.**

7. While there have been a number of initiatives to attract and retain the best teachers in the most challenging secondary schools, there has been relatively little attention paid to primary schools. Yet the attainment gap between poorer pupils and the rest remains stubborn and persistent. **Financial incentives for teachers, such as the £10,000 golden handcuffs initiative or higher salaries, should be extended to primary schools serving disadvantaged communities.**

8. Communities of primary schools can do a lot working together through consortia both to improve the availability of teacher training and to provide better professional development. The Training Schools programme, which enables schools to focus on teacher training, has been closed to primary schools since it became linked to high performing secondary specialist schools. **Through consortia successful primaries should be able to become training schools.** Any primary academies which are established should be expected to have this as one of their roles.

9. **Consortia can also help primary teaching to develop a more attractive career structure.** Although pay and career structure is not the only motivation for entering teaching – and the profession will increasingly appeal to those with several different types of job during their career – it is important that those with leadership potential and ambition find teaching to be an attractive career route. The government should do more to promote new leadership options in primary schools, such as executive headship, which can help improve standards, efficiency and the attractiveness of a primary teaching career. This structure may also help to attract more men into teaching.

10. There is an important role for the Teaching and Development Agency (TDA) in its style of advertising. Earlier advertising emphasised the challenges and excitement of the job. But with an over-emphasis on salary, the current campaign may give too little sense of the challenges involved in engaging young people. Emphasising the challenges of the job - and the skills they foster - would raise the status of teaching, and attract the kind of applicant who is willing to meet those challenges. **Advertising shouldn't hide the challenges.**

1. WHY PRIMARY EDUCATION MATTERS

Between five and eleven, children learn a lot of what should stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives. While there may be different views about what should be taught in primary school – with the government’s review under Sir Jim Rose seeking to change the curriculum and a parallel review led by Prof Robin Alexander seeking to supersede it – there is general agreement on the crucial importance of primary education. The remit for the Rose review offers a good summary of what is involved:

“Nothing is more important than the body of essential knowledge, skills and understanding we choose as a nation to pass on to our young people. The primary curriculum must ensure that all pupils can build on their prior learning ... to develop the essential reading, writing, numeracy and personal skills they need to learn and develop. It must provide all pupils with a broad and balanced entitlement to learning which encourages creativity and inspires in them a commitment to learning that will last a lifetime.”²

Unlike their secondary colleagues, primary teachers are expected to have sufficient expertise across a curriculum that ranges through these skills to cover aspects of history, science and geography, as well as the more recent addition of modern foreign languages. This also means that pupils are typically taught by one teacher throughout each crucial year of their primary education. So it matters even more how good that person is. A recent study by Durham University, for example, found that the effect of having an exceptionally poor – or an unusually good – teacher in the reception year was still detectable six years later. As Professor Peter Tymms, who led the study, commented: "More effort needs to be spent on the most valuable years which are the earliest years. The residual effect lasts as long as we can measure it." ³

The primary teacher is typically in charge of a group of 26 pupils (often more) for a whole crucial year of their lives, as well as managing the work of at least one teaching assistant. While the adult: pupil ratio has improved with the expansion of teaching assistants in recent years – there is now one adult to every 11.6 primary children – the teacher: pupil ratio in UK primary schools, at 21.6, is higher than the US and France at 19 or Finland at 18 pupils to every primary teacher.³

Initiatives in primary education

Between 1995 and 2000, there was a flurry of interest in what happens in primary schools. The publication of the first national curriculum test results in 1995, which showed fewer than half of pupils reaching an expected standard in English and Maths, led to a range of initiatives designed to improve results in those subjects. Most notably, the national literacy strategy and the national numeracy strategy were introduced by the incoming government in 1997, with an

² Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum *Interim Report* (DCSF, 2008)

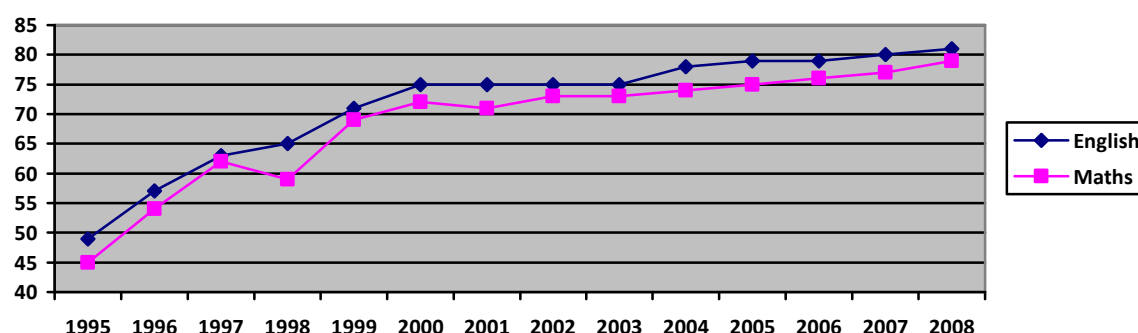
³ Reported at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article6169479.ece. Professor Tymms’ study tracked the progress of 73,000 primary school pupils

³ English DCSF data from www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000844/SFR09_2009.pdf. International OECD data from www.oecd.org/dataoecd/39/62/1840245.pdf. The English figure is from 2009; other data are from 2006.

expectation that teachers should spend an hour a day teaching literacy and 45 minutes on maths.

There were plenty of supportive initiatives focused on these subjects, including some changes to teacher training and a reduction in maximum infant class sizes. This focus led to a substantial improvement in overall results between 1995 and 2000. As Table 1 shows, 49% of pupils achieved level 4 or above in English in 1995, and 45% did so in Mathematics. By 2000, the total had risen to 75% in English and 72% in Maths. Since then, progress has been much slower. In 2008, 81% achieved level 4 or above in English and 79% did so in Maths.⁴

TABLE 1: Changes in Key Stage 2 results 1995-2008



More recently, the government has refocused on primary education, which may have contributed to some limited improvements in test results after 2004. Sir Jim Rose's proposal in 2006 that synthetic phonics should be an expectation in the teaching of reading has attracted cross-party support.⁵ There have also been moves to support those who fall behind in reading and maths with the Every Child A Reader programme and the Every Child Counts initiative.⁶ The recent Rose review of the primary school curriculum has recommended a greater emphasis on key skills and a more thematic approach to the teaching of subjects.⁷

However, there are still substantial gaps in pupils' knowledge of key subjects, which are more pronounced amongst those from poorer backgrounds, as Chart 2 shows. While there is a ten-point gap in English between boys and girls generally (and virtually no gap in maths), there are wide gaps between those in receipt of free school meals – the poorest 15 per cent of pupils – and those who are not. In English, the gap for boys is a significant 32 percentage points, with 58 per cent of those eligible for free school meals reaching level 4 compared with 80 per cent of those not eligible. In Maths, the gap for girls is 19 percentage points.⁸

⁴ DCSF Statistical First Release 06/2009.

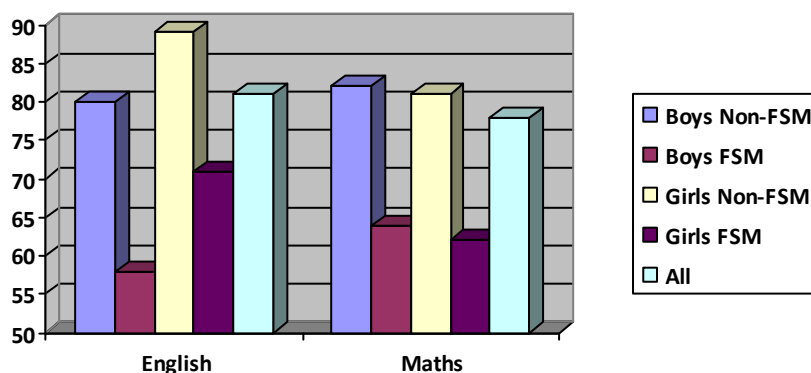
⁵ Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading (DCSF, 2006) available at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/phonics/report.pdf

⁶ See www.everychildareader.org and www.everychildachancetrust.org/counts/index.cfm.

⁷ See www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/

⁸ Figures in Chart 2 are derived from tables at www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000822/index.shtml.

CHART 2: PROPORTIONS GAINING LEVEL 4 AT KEY STAGE 2, 2008.



Research for the National Union of Teachers and the National College of School Leadership has confirmed the importance of social class as a factor in underachievement, particularly among boys.⁹

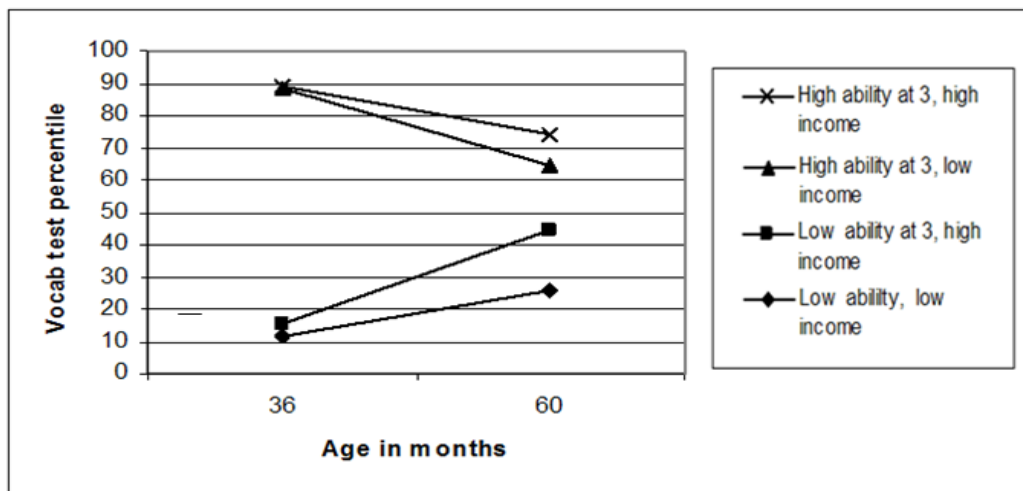
After more than a century of free, compulsory education and sixty years of the welfare state, family income and status are by far the most significant correlates of success in the school system. Although gender is also an independent and significant factor, the social class attainment gap at Key Stage 4 is three times as wide as the gender gap. On average, with the exception of the small group of students described as 'travellers', 'white British' boys entitled to free school meals were the male group with lowest attainment and 'white British' girls entitled to free school meals were the female group with lowest attainment.

There is also evidence that the gaps in achievement between better off and poorer children widen with age.¹⁰ Research sponsored by the Sutton Trust has shown that those from the poorest fifth of households - but in the brightest group on test scores - drop from the 88th percentile at age three to the 65th percentile at age five. Those from the richest fifth of households - but who are least able at age three - move up from the 15th percentile to the 45th percentile by age five. If this trend were to continue, the children from affluent backgrounds would overtake the poorer children in test scores by age seven - the heart of the primary school years.

⁹ Mongon, D and Chapman, C *Successful leadership for promoting the achievement of white working class pupils* (NCSL, 2008). www.ncsl.org.uk/publications-index/publications-display.htm?id=29091.

¹⁰ Feinstein, L (1999) *Preschool educational inequality? British children in the 1970 cohort* cited in *Getting on, Getting Ahead* (Cabinet Office, 2008)

CHART 3: EVOLUTION OF TEST SCORES BY EARLY ABILITY AND FAMILY INCOME FOR CHILDREN IN THE MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY



However, an important way of mitigating this effect is by attending an effective primary school, as research for the DCSF has shown.¹¹

Children who had the benefit of attending a primary school identified, through the National Assessments, as academically more effective had better outcomes at age 11 than children who attended a less academically effective primary school, taking account of other background influences.

The study also showed that attending an academically effective primary school had particular benefits for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, though a good pre-school education was particularly important to their development.

And highly dedicated, motivated and able teachers are at the heart of academically effective schools. A National Education Trust study of over 7,000 lessons in primary schools has highlighted the strong correlation between good and outstanding teachers and children from all backgrounds making good progress through their primary years. Lesson observations showed that very good teachers carry with them strong subject knowledge enabling them to pitch lessons at a level which will stimulate and extend all learners. They have a passion for learning which they share enthusiastically with their pupils, and create 'sparkling classrooms where digression is treasured' and where there is an unambiguous quest for achievement.¹²

¹¹ *Influences on Children's Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 2: Cognitive Outcomes in Year 6 (Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project)* DCSF, 2008.

¹² *BLINK, to see clearly* (National Education Trust, 2009)

This is confirmed by a recent US study which showed that children identified by their kindergarten teachers at the age of 5 or 6 as being at risk because of demographic characteristics and concerns about behaviour and achievement, could overcome some of this disadvantage with good teachers. By the end of first grade, at-risk students placed in first-grade classrooms offering strong instructional and emotional support had achievement scores and student-teacher relationships as good as those of their low risk classmates. At-risk students placed in less supportive classrooms, however, had lower levels of achievement and more conflict with their teachers.¹³

¹³ Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Academic and social advantages for at-risk students placed in high quality first grade classrooms. *Child Development*, 76(5), 949-967.

2. ROUTES INTO TEACHING

There are 165,200 qualified full-time primary teachers in English schools, with a further 27,600 posts filled by part-timers. 12,000 teachers are acting as instructors, occasional teachers or are on the Graduate Teacher Programme, where they can train on the job.¹⁴

Nearly 8,000 graduates join higher education based courses to become a primary teacher each year, compared with 13,000 training to become a secondary teacher. Of those, a growing minority are male, but despite such recent improvements, only 1,402 – or 17.5% - of accepted applicants in 2008 were men.¹⁵ A further 7,605 students join four year undergraduate teaching courses each year.¹⁶ There are then 3,000 primary teachers trained in schools through the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) or School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT).¹⁷ The government has recently said that it wants outstanding postgraduate candidates to be able to qualify within six months rather than a year, on the basis that this would be a more attractive prospect for high calibre candidates.¹⁸ It has also offered new recruits to the secondary sector the possibility of a golden handcuff of £10,000 should they remain in a National Challenge school beyond three years.²⁰

Employment-based routes

Significantly, primary school trainees are more likely to be trained within universities than their secondary school peers (80% versus 74%), and are more likely to take undergraduate three or four year Bachelor of Education qualifications than the one-year PGCE (46% compared with just 6%).¹⁹

Nonetheless, there has been a big expansion in the number of places available for in-school training since 1997: work-based primary placements have risen from fewer than 200 in 1998 to over 3,000 today. SCITT is delivered by consortia of schools and is open to recent graduates. The GTP has been targeted at more mature graduates and with a salary of £14,200 a year (more in London) has been an important route for career changers. The TDA estimates that a third of all new teachers are aged over 30, many of them switching from other professions.²⁰

¹⁴ Figures are full-time equivalent from DCSF Statistical First Release 28/2008.

¹⁵ Graduate Teacher Training Registry www.gttr.ac.uk/providers/statistics/applicantstatistics.

¹⁶ UCAS Press Release, 15 January 2009 www.ucas.ac.uk/website/news/media_releases/2009/2009-01-15

¹⁷ 2006/7 data supplied by the TDA press office

¹⁸ DCSF Press Release, 10 March 2009

²⁰ See www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article5505150.ece

¹⁹ Smithers A and Robinson P, *The Good Teacher Training Guide 2008* (University of Buckingham, 2008)

²⁰ TDA factsheet at www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/r/recruitment_figures_2008.pdf

High performing specialist schools are also eligible to add teacher training to their role as Training Schools. The 230-school programme had included primary schools in its original version, but changes since 2005 mean that new training schools can only be opened in secondary schools.²¹ Training schools often have a significant number of in-school trainees as well as providing teaching practice for those on university-based courses.

There are big advantages to the more practical orientation of in-school training. As a recent Policy Exchange report, *More Good Teachers*²² put it:

“At the beginning of their careers, new teachers need to acquire the craft of managing classrooms so that pupils learn effectively. This is not achieved through the acquisition of abstract knowledge in a seminar room; it is gained through apprentice-style training in classrooms.”

Of course, all teachers must spend a significant part of their training time in the classroom, typically two thirds of a PGCE course. But the number of applicants for employment-based training continues to outstrip the places available, with 6634 applications for 5164 places in 2006/7,²³ though the PGCE and B Ed remain the default routes for most trainees. Moreover, despite the attractiveness of employment-based routes (in terms of being on a salary and not having to undertake an extended period of study), only a fifth of recent graduates are aware of programmes like Teach First and the GTP.²⁴ And primary school teachers are less likely to be late career-switchers than their counterparts in secondary schools. So, there is unmet demand for work-based programmes, which is particularly acute in the primary sector.

Teach First

In secondary schools, there is an additional route into the teaching profession. Borrowing from a successful US initiative, Teach First encourages top graduates, who would not normally enter teaching, to teach for at least two years in challenging secondary schools in London, the North West, Yorkshire and the Midlands.

The programme was launched in 2003, initially as part of the London Challenge school reform programme. It was based on Teach for America, which started in 1990 and now recruits 3,700 teachers for urban US schools each year.²⁵ The American programme now attracts applications from 11 per cent of all Yale graduates and seven per cent of Harvard graduates.²⁶

Teach First has been hailed as a remarkable success by schools, Ofsted, journalists and politicians. Teach First recruits, trains, places and supports between 500 and 600 exceptional teachers each year who it believes can make a real difference in the most challenged secondary

²¹ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/trainingschools/news/?version=1

²² Freedman, S, Lipson, B and Hargreaves, D, *op cit*

²³ Figures supplied by the TDA Press Office.

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ www.teachforamerica.org

²⁶ *Times*, June 23, 2008

schools. By 2008, nearly 1000 graduates had completed the Teach First programme and it aims to increase its annual recruitment levels to over 1000 by 2014.²⁷

CHART 4: THE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FROM TEACH FIRST TEACHERS

Humility, Respect and Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of own weaknesses and ability to recognise the value of others • Respect for all cultures and behaves in a way that does not cause offence • Ability to share others experiences by relating to their situation
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate ideas in ways that others understand using a range of techniques (body language, listening, tone, verbal, visual, written) • Supports and encourages others and learns from interactions and adapts style • Active and focused team player who has the ability to build rapport
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Knowledge • Knowledge and passion for the 2 year programme and beyond • Demonstrates connection to the mission and articulate impact they will make at the various stages • Understanding and respect of the challenges involved
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving results over and above the expected level • Continually takes personal responsibility for the success of tasks • Demonstrates a variety of leadership qualities (delegation, drive, encouragement, high expectations of others and self, judgement)
Planning and Organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to organise work load at times of extreme pressure • Demonstrates preparation and planning to ensure success
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a logical and practical approach to tasks by breaking down problems into manageable chunks. • Consistently generates innovative, creative and effective solutions • Considers the pros and cons of all possible solutions and the cause and effect of those outcomes
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive outlook - consistently draws the positive from challenges • Perseveres sustaining high levels of energy to achieve results despite the odds and significant adversity • Under pressure acts and progresses in a calm and mature manner
Self Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses in own performance • Takes ownership for development as a result of feedback, self analysis and learning from mistakes

Teach First combines initial teacher training – including an intensive six week introduction to teaching - with volunteer coaching, networking opportunities and a bespoke leadership development programme. While attractive to top graduates, it prides itself on its competencies (Chart 4), personal traits which it believes are essential to a good teacher. The programme has many high-profile City, industrial and educational partners. Teach First also runs a Leadership Development Programme which focuses on three key areas: Leading Learning, Leading People and Leading Organisations. As well as establishing an integrated Masters programme,²⁸ the

²⁷

Hansard, 6 Oct 2008 : Column 512W; Information provided by Teach First.

²⁸

From www.teachfirst.org.uk

organisation has also started working with further education colleges to find more challenging placement for students.²⁹

Teach First outcomes

Teach First alumni, or Ambassadors, choose either to remain in schools or move into other sectors in which they have the opportunity to use the experiences and insights they have gained in teaching to inform future education decision-making. As of February 2009, 55% of alumni remain in teaching, with 57% of these currently moving quickly into school leadership positions. Almost two-thirds of those who move into other sectors continue to do pupil mentoring, become school governors or undertake other school support positions.³⁰

The programme is hugely competitive. It attracted 1670 applications in 2008 for 373 places.³¹ Ofsted reported that the programme

“recruited highly motivated graduates with outstanding personal qualities and strong subject expertise. Although trainees found their immersion into teaching exceptionally challenging, around a half achieved the Standards for QTS to an outstanding level, a third to a good level and the others to a satisfactory level.....Teach First trainees made a positive contribution to the schools visited....Participants remaining in their schools for a second year or more were starting to have a notable impact, for example, in transforming underperforming departments. At least one of the schools visited attributed a rapid improvement in its standards almost entirely to the contribution of Teach First participants.”³²

Members of the Commons Public Accounts Committee have called for Teach First to be extended into primary schools, which they believe would particularly help improve maths teaching.³³ Teach First have also piloted placements for Modern Foreign Language graduates in London primary schools and, significantly, the Teach for America scheme covers both Elementary and High Schools. In Atlanta, for example, half of the Teach for America intake are deployed to Elementary schools. In the English pilot, there were just ten modern language graduates involved in the first year of the programme, but Teach First believe that there are many good graduates who would prefer generalist teaching to a focus on their single specialist subject. They hope to attract 30 primary trainees in 2009-10.³⁴

²⁹ Teach First press release, 31 March 2009

³⁰ From www.teachfirst.org.uk

³¹ National Educational Trust

³² *Rising to the Challenge: a review of the Teach First initial teacher training programme* (Ofsted, 2008)

³³ *TES*, 12 December 2008

³⁴ Information supplied by Teach First.

3. A CASE FOR REFORM

Primary school teaching suffers as the poor relation to secondary teaching, yet it is arguably even more important to children's development, and their acquisition of knowledge and skills. Progress in improving literacy and numeracy has been relatively slow since 2000. Salaries and career progression, though better than before, remain less attractive than in secondary schools. The number of male primary teachers remains too low. And high profile programmes like Teach First are largely open to those interested in secondary teaching, while many primary teachers are taught through more theory-based courses like the B Ed rather than on highly practical employment-based routes such as the Graduate Teacher Programme. Raising the status of primary teaching requires a new approach.

THREE CHALLENGES FOR THE PROFESSION

Primary teaching faces three interrelated challenges if it is to provide the grounding that is so important for young people.

- We need more good primary teachers , particularly in the most challenging schools
- We need more men to become primary teachers
- We need to raise the status of primary school teaching

Why we need more good primary teachers

The most important factors in a good quality education relate to the quality of teaching. An analysis of the world's best performing education systems by McKinsey and Company has cited three main factors that characterise the best systems: getting the right people to become teachers; developing them into effective instructors; and ensuring the best possible instruction for every child.³⁵ A separate US analysis³⁶ found that a teacher's own early experience, test scores and subject matter knowledge are all linked to higher student achievement.

Teaching is no longer seen as the choice of those who couldn't think of any better alternative career. In 1994, a survey of 1,400 undergraduates by the National Commission on Education found that 27 per cent of those expecting a Third had chosen teaching as a career compared with fewer than 10 per cent of those expecting a First.³⁷ A successful recruitment campaign by the Teacher Training Agency in the late nineties helped push teaching into the top five graduate careers, with the slogan "*Those Who Can, Teach*". This was backed by higher salaries and golden hellos, particularly for some shortage secondary subjects.

³⁵ Barber, M and Moushed, M How the world's best performing school systems come out on top (McKinsey, London, 2007).

³⁶ www.knit.or.th/scienceandmath/docs/Education_report.pdf

³⁷ Brian Jacob and Jens Ludwig, Sutton Trust, forthcoming

³⁷ *Independent*, 16 February 1994

Data from the TTA's successor, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), more recently has shown that 58% of secondary trainees and 60% of primary trainees had a 2:1 or better, both up seven percentage points from 2000.³⁸ But, in a similar analysis, Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson have suggested that the improvements in the qualifications of teaching candidates simply match changes in degree classifications achieved across the graduate population. In other words, the calibre of those entering the profession has not improved as significantly as the data suggest.³⁹

Ofsted has also reported improvements in the quality of primary teaching. Nevertheless, there remain concerns about the absence of good teaching in a significant minority of primary schools, with a third of teaching reported as being "no better than satisfactory." In particular, the chief inspector notes that too often primary teachers have

"good generic teaching skills but, where they lack expertise in a subject, teaching often becomes overly directive and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. In such lessons pupils, especially the higher attainers, have little scope to be creative, to research and produce their own hypotheses or solutions, or to explore and develop their understanding at higher levels."⁴⁰

Given the link between teaching quality and student attainment it is crucial that the most effective teachers are deployed in those schools with the highest proportion of poorer children, if the achievement gaps at and before Key Stage Two are to be narrowed.

Why we need more men to become primary teachers

Another critical issue is the gender imbalance in primary schools. Only 26,180 full-time primary teachers - around 16 per cent - are male.⁴¹ There have been targeted campaigns to improve male recruitment which appears to have halted a decline. Yet while 26 per cent of all first year teacher trainees were men in 2008, only 14 per cent of primary trainees were men compared with 37 per cent of secondary trainees.⁴² The result is that 39 per cent of boys at primary school have no male teachers and 8 per cent have never been taught by a man. The typical primary school has just three male teachers, while one in ten has none.

Yet there is evidence that boys feel male teachers would help them perform better in school. More than half of eight-to-eleven year-olds say that male teachers would make them behave better while 42 per cent say they would make them work harder. Over a third say they would help to boost their confidence.⁴³

Half of men surveyed by the TDA believed that having a male primary teacher at primary school provided them with a good role model. 35 per cent felt that having a male primary teacher

³⁸ TDA Press Release, 21 July 2008

³⁹ Smithers A and Robinson P, *The Good Teacher Training Guide 2008* (University of Buckingham, 2008)

⁴⁰ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08* (Ofsted, 2008)

⁴¹ *Hansard*, 25 Mar 2009 : Column 551W

⁴² TDA Press Release, 21 July 2008

⁴³ TDA Press Release, 31 July 2007. The research was carried out by YouGov Plc in June 2007 with a sample of 603 children aged 8-11 attending primary schools in England.

challenged them to work harder and 22 per cent believed that male primary teachers helped build their confidence while they were young. Men also felt boys were more likely to approach male teachers about issues over bullying.⁴⁴

Of course, nobody would want to recruit poor male teachers for the sake of gender balance: any head would prefer a good female teacher to a merely satisfactory male one. But by having so few male teachers in primary schools, the sector is losing out on a potential pool of talent across half the population – and boys are losing out on potential male role models.

Why we need to raise the status of primary school teaching

While primary teaching is better paid than before, primary school teachers and leaders tend to be paid significantly less than their secondary colleagues. The average primary head's salary has risen from £30,100 in 1997 to £50,000 in 2007, a 32% increase in real terms, but it remains significantly below the £69,000 average for secondary schools.⁴⁵ Just as primary schools are given less per pupil than their secondary counterparts, primary teachers earn an average of £30,400 a year compared with £33,400 in secondary schools, but the absence of a stronger career structure and fewer opportunities to progress to higher pay scales with more responsibility will inevitably deter some candidates.

This is one reason why bodies like the National College for School Leadership have advocated a greater role for executive heads that would run several primary schools, a response which also addresses the costs and difficulties of finding leaders for smaller schools.⁴⁶ It is also why ministers have – with echoes of Finland – proposed a new Masters degree in Teaching and Learning to which all teachers, primary and secondary, should strive.⁴⁷ But primary teaching is still not a sufficiently attractive career for many graduates, particularly as key and high profile programmes have focused solely on secondary schools.

⁴⁴ TDA Press Release, 30 September 2008. Research was carried out by ICM among 837 male adults.

⁴⁵ *School Teachers Review Body: Evidence from the Rewards and Incentives Group* (2009) at www.lge.gov.uk.

⁴⁶ See, for example, NCSL Chief Executive Steve Munby's speech to Seizing Success 2008: NCSL Annual Leadership Conference.

⁴⁷ DCSF Press Release, 7 March 2008.

4. POTENTIAL WAYS FORWARD FOR POLICYMAKERS

There is a compromise between giving trainees a substantial period of lecture-based education and attracting enough able trainees in the first place. If more good applicants applied for initial teacher training, course leaders would have more choice in who they admitted, raising the quality of the teachers in training, and teachers in the classroom. With the UK having one of the highest pupil:teacher ratios at primary level in the developed world, there is also an argument that as a nation we need more primary teacher places – but at a time of constrained education spending, the focus of this paper is on ensuring the brightest and best enter the profession, rather than increasing overall numbers.

Our recommendations are designed to give a greater role for employment-based training, making it easier for graduates and professionals to choose this option, and to increase co-operation between schools to improve teacher training and professional development, whilst providing a career structure with more opportunities for primary leaders. We also propose that financial incentives should be available to attract and retain the best teachers in the most challenging schools and a more straightforward approach to advertising.

A A greater role for employment-based training

Teacher training programmes in universities and other higher education institutions are generally well-led, but Ofsted reports ‘little difference in the judgements made [by inspectors] about school-centred training schemes and those led by higher education institutions.’⁴⁸ And the success of school-based ITT programmes, particularly Teach First, suggests that an extended period of lecture-based teacher education prior to starting in the classroom is not essential to becoming a good teacher.

The Policy Exchange paper *More Good Teachers* and the National Education Trust paper *How long does it take to train a teacher?* both proposed that school and employment-based routes for teacher training should become the default option for both undergraduates and career changers. As we have seen, the GTP is already chosen by many career changers. But most undergraduates either take a four year B Ed. course – particularly primary recruits – or the PGCE. Yet 46% of B Ed. Students felt their course was “too theoretical” as did 33% of primary PGCE students. This compared with just 5% of those on Primary GTP courses.

The GTP was designed with a focus on graduates over the age of 24 (although the age requirement has since been abolished) and the SCITT programme is not widely available. The Policy Exchange proposal would retain Teach First as a “niche route for highly qualified undergraduates who wanted to work in the most challenging schools.” But it would be complemented by Teach Now, a new route for both recent graduates and career changes,

⁴⁸

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08 (Ofsted, 2008), p50

incorporating aspects of the GTP, SCITT and Teach First models. The authors also propose a Teach Next route for leaders (which might complement the Teach First-style Future Leaders programme⁴⁹).

With heavy promotion of this route by the TDA, the authors envisage that the B Ed. would gradually be phased out and the number of PGCE places reduced.⁵⁰

Looking towards the next decade and inevitable constraints on government spending, while there may be a residual role for the PGCE and the B Ed, much more of this provision could be replaced by good in-school training, and the funds diverted to continuing professional development courses for all teachers, particularly towards the development of the new Masters programmes.

Most young people entering the workforce today are likely to change jobs seven to ten times in their careers. With fewer jobs for life, teacher training routes should also adapt. Increasing school based training routes into primary school teaching would allow people to move in and out of the profession with more ease, and increase the number and quality of people who might consider teaching for a few years, as happens with Teach First.

In fact, Teach First actively markets to participants who would not otherwise have considered teaching, as well as attracting top graduates put off by narrowing their options with a PGCE, spending more money, and spending another year at university. Ofsted reported that 40% of Teach First participants in their review had previously considered doing a PGCE, but had decided against it.⁵¹ 85% of early Teach First candidates said that a major factor in choosing the programme was because they wanted to keep their future career options open.⁵²

Recommendation 1: More employment-based places should be available for primary teaching

Even with this expansion, Teach First will continue to focus on the highest calibre graduates, including those who may only want to enter teaching for a couple of years. But the wider practical benefits of the employment-based option are recognised by both schools and trainees. The main employment-based route remains the GTP, but a disproportionate number of GTP places are in secondary schools. More places should be made available in primary schools, ensuring that practical pedagogic skills in teaching the basics and behaviour management are put into practice early on at the whiteboard or chalkface.

⁴⁹ See www.future-leaders.org.uk

⁵⁰ *More Good Teachers* (Policy Exchange, 2008)

⁵¹ Ofsted *op cit*

⁵² Hutchings M. *et al*, *An Evaluation of Innovative Approaches to Teacher Training on the Teach First Programme* (Institute for Policy Studies in Education/TDA, 2006)

Recommendation 2: More employment-based opportunities should be opened to new graduates.

Young graduates should have as much choice of an employment-based route as those who are a little older and more experienced. A wider programme such as the Teach Now proposal should be developed to provide new graduates - and career changers - who want to enter teaching with the chance to train in primary schools.

Recommendation 3: Teach First should be extended to primary schools

The failure to open Teach First to primary schools is reinforcing the perception of primary teaching as a second-class option. The aim should be to provide as many primary as secondary Teach First recruits, building on the example of Teach for America. This should involve a doubling of current targets for Teach First so that over 1000 recruits a year are drawn to each sector by 2014. The expansion should be a replacement for existing B Ed and PGCE places.

Taken together, these three recommendations could form the meat of a new Teach Primary Scheme.

B The most effective primary teachers are needed in the most challenging schools

The gap between the achievement of students on free school meals and those who are not is stubborn and persistent. There is also evidence that bright students from poor backgrounds fall behind their less able peers from better-off homes as the primary years unfold. Research suggests that these inequalities can be reduced through effective and high quality teaching.

Recommendation 4: Financial incentives should be used to recruit and retain the most effective teachers and best graduates to the most challenging primary schools

In the secondary sector we have seen initiatives such as golden hellos to attract graduates to shortage subjects and golden handcuffs to retain high-flyers in schools with low levels of achievement. While there is no shortage of teachers at primary level, similar initiatives – including higher salary differentials - can be used to attract the brightest and best to the poorest primary schools.

C Communities of primary schools working together on training and professional development

One objection to involving primary schools more in teacher training is their small size. But the trend towards greater co-operation between schools through federations, shared leadership

and trusts should make it easier for primaries to work together to improve the quality of teacher training and professional development.

Moving a greater proportion of teacher training into the classroom not only has a positive effect on trainees, but also on other teachers in those schools. Serving teachers are needed to mentor them, which has professional development benefits. With more trainees in schools taking lessons, this would also free up some of the teacher's time to access university based mentoring and leadership courses.

This has been an important result of the Training Schools programme. In its evaluation of the programme, Ofsted reported that teachers in almost all of the schools felt that the programme had resulted in improvements in their teaching; they had become more reflective and analytical of their own practice. But the training school initiative, although initially including primary schools, is now only open to high performing specialist schools, a programme currently operating in the secondary sector.

Primary schools could also be clustered for other training opportunities, encouraging the sharing of good practice. Indeed, with an executive headship model, this would be a natural extension of such a federal approach. Not only could staff visit and observe good practice in other partnership schools, but larger groups of teachers with similar interests could meet regularly to share ideas and resources, a practice that Teach First participants have marked as being crucial to its success.

Recommendation 5: Successful primaries should be able to work in clusters to become training schools and to share professional development.

Good primary schools should be eligible as consortia to apply to become new Training Schools. This would benefit new and serving teachers, as such consortia could also become centres of excellence for professional development. If primary academies are introduced, they should be expected to develop a teacher training role, which could be shared with their neighbours.

Giving trainees early responsibility for classes and the opportunity to earn on-the-job may also attract more male primary teachers. Employment-based routes have been shown to recruit more males: 17% of trainees on employment-based primary routes are men, compared with 13% on university-based courses. But there are other reasons why men shy away from primary school teaching, not all of which can be addressed by changes in teacher training. Concerns about paedophilia and the ingrained idea that primary school teaching is “a female job” will require attitudinal changes. But training, pay and career structure improvements may not only make primary teaching more appealing to good graduates of both sexes; it can also raise the status of the profession in the eyes of society.

There is a perception that primary schools offer a less challenging career route than secondary schools. Yet there is a more varied career structure emerging with the growth of trust schools,

opportunities to work with secondary schools as part of all-age academies and the development of federal structures bringing groups of primary schools together under a single executive head. The introduction of Every Child Matters and the development of full service extended schools, where health and childcare services are provided on a school campus have also made the role of primary school leaders more challenging.⁵³

The National College for School Leadership has been promoting the idea of a single head leading a group of smaller primary schools as a more efficient model for those schools and one which would help solve recruitment difficulties.⁵⁴ But such a model is also the sort of challenging leadership option that could make the primary heads' career structure more attractive to male graduates.

Recommendation 6: Primary teaching should develop a more attractive career structure where leadership of consortia and groups of schools becomes more common.

Although pay and career structure is not the only motivation for entering teaching – and the profession will increasingly appeal to those with several different types of job during their career – it is important that those with leadership potential and ambition find teaching to be an attractive career route. The government should do more to promote new leadership options in primary schools, such as executive headship, which can help improve standards, efficiency and the attractiveness of a primary teaching career.

D Advertising

There is an important role to be played in all this by TDA advertising. In the late nineties a campaign by the TDA's predecessor, the TTA, reduced teacher shortages and raised the attractiveness of the profession to graduates, with the slogan, *Those Who Can, Teach*. Subsequent advertising targeted at career changers emphasised the challenges and excitement of the job. But with an over-emphasis on salary, the current campaign may give too little sense of the challenges involved in engaging young people.

Emphasising the challenges of the job - and the skills they foster - would raise the status of teaching, and attract the kind of applicant who was willing to meet those challenges. The popularity of Teach First among graduates from Russell Group universities shows that rather than deterring people from teaching, highlighting the scale of the task ahead catches the attention of ambitious graduates, keen on "testing (the) limits of determination to succeed."⁵⁵

⁵³ See Independent Study into School Leadership (PricewaterhouseCoopers for DCSF, 2007) available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR818A.pdf and Chapman C et al, Emerging Patterns of School Leadership (NCSL, Nottingham, 2008) available at www.ncsl.org.uk/publications-index/publications-display.htm?id=23897

⁵⁴ See NCSL Chief Executive Steve Munby's speech to Seizing Success 2008: NCSL Annual Leadership Conference

⁵⁵ Quote from former Teach First participant, Lessons from the Front (Policy First)

Recommendation 7: Advertising shouldn't hide the challenges

Primary teaching should not be about a quiet life. If it is not seen as presenting exciting challenges, it will not attract sufficient high calibre graduates. The TDA should review its advertising to ensure that it is doing enough to target the best, and with more employment-based places, ensure that primary teaching is not seen as a poor cousin of secondary.

Appendix

Routes into teaching

	Primary level			Secondary level		
	Uni-based	Work Based	Total	Uni-based	Work Based	Total
No of students	14,468	3,481	17,949	15,036	5,356	20,392
% of trainees	80.6	19.4	100	73.7	26.3	100
% Male	13.1	16.5	13.8	36.8	38.4	37.2
%Age25+	37.1	84	46.2	54.5	74.5	59.8
%Post grads	53.9	96.1		94.1	99.3	95.5

Adapted from Smithers A and Robinson P, *The Good Teacher Training Guide 2008* (University of Buckingham, 2008)