

**Good Practice in Mentoring Trainee
Primary Teachers
in Wales**

September 2001



Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Written guidance	2
3. Training for mentors	4
4. Mentoring in schools	6
5. The impact of effective mentoring	10
6. The way forward	14

1. Introduction

Purpose of the report

Increasingly, higher education institutions are working in partnership with primary schools to mentor trainee primary teachers in schools. Mentors are designated teachers who take responsibility for trainees when they are in their school. The purpose of this report is to outline features of good practice in mentoring and to identify the impact that effective mentoring has on all those involved in the mentoring partnership. The report should help higher education institutions and their partner primary schools to evaluate and improve the mentoring of trainee primary teachers in Wales.

Evidence base for the report

The report is based on information obtained from a survey of five initial teacher training providers and a sample of their partner schools carried out during the spring and summer terms 2001. HMI examined partnership documentation, held discussions with college tutors, mentors and trainees and observed mentor training sessions. The report also draws on evidence from the full inspections of the three initial teacher training institutions inspected during 1999-2001.

2. Written guidance

Written guidance for mentors and trainees

Where partnership arrangements are well established, supporting written guidance for mentors and trainees is of good quality. The partnership requirements, roles and responsibilities of mentors and expectations of trainees are identified and described effectively. Practical guidance is presented clearly and concisely and, in consultation with mentors, regularly updated.

An increasing number of schools produce written guidance for trainees in their schools. This information provides a useful introduction to school life for the trainees. In the best cases, trainees received this written guidance prior to starting their school placement.

Features of effective written guidance include:

- a clear outline of the principles of partnership;
- policies for mentoring trainees that are relevant to the linguistic and geographical context of the schools and partner education institution;
- background information on the school;
- requirements and expectations the school has of trainees;
- advice on the management of partnership and quality assurance procedures;
- well-defined roles and responsibilities for all those involved in the partnership;
- useful check lists and prompts for trainees, college staff and school mentors;
- guidance on providing support for trainees to plan and assess;
- specific requirements for assessing trainees' progress;
- advice on assessing trainees' teaching and completion of assessment forms;
- examples of good written feedback and target setting;
- contact names and addresses to aid communication within the partnership;
- evaluation forms to allow trainees to feedback on the strengths and shortcomings of their experience in school; and
- partnership files that are colour coded and are user friendly for schools.

Examples of effective written guidance

Case study 1:
effective written
guidance
produced by the
higher education
institution

Partner schools receive detailed guidance and support materials to help them plan a well-structured programme of seminars as a supplement to college lectures in education and professional studies. These programmes include a detailed introduction to the school. Mentors understand the content of the college-based course and make good use of their own copies of the college set textbooks in school-based seminars.

Key features include:

- a seminar programme in school that is closely linked to the college-based course; and
- detailed guidance that ensures that all partner schools understand their responsibilities in providing school-based training.

Case study 2:
effective written
guidance
produced by the
school

The senior mentor in one primary school has produced a comprehensive information pack for the trainees' school placements. This pack provides separate information for trainees working in the early years and key stages 1 and 2. The pack includes:

- the mentoring policy;
- the school prospectus;
- school policies on, for example, discipline, handwriting, marking and health and safety;
- guidance on classroom organisation;
- information on learning through play for pupils in the early years;
- examples of planning and assessment procedures used by the school;
- details of what the school expects from its trainees; and
- an evaluation sheet for trainees' comments.

Key features include:

- the provision of written support and guidance;
- information that is relevant and useful to the trainee during the placement;
- clear expectations of trainees with regard to their role in the daily life of the school; and
- evaluation that is used to improve procedures in the school.

3. Training for mentors

Training for mentors by higher education institutions

Most higher education institutions provide regular training sessions for mentors. Training is effective when it meets the specific needs of both mentors and schools. In the best practice, new mentors receive well-planned induction and are trained in the various stages of trainees' courses. Experienced mentors receive regular updates and contribute to training sessions by sharing good practice. Training is particularly effective where mentors are encouraged to recognise the importance of developing their own school-based training programmes. This enables trainees to become part of the whole life of the school quickly and confidently.

Features of effective mentor training in higher education institutions include:

- practical advice and guidance for mentors, sometimes in the form of video exemplification;
- opportunities for mentors to discuss their experiences of working with trainees;
- regular updates on current issues;
- a focus on good mentoring practice;
- workshops based on moderating and assessing trainees' performance during their school placement;
- examples of effective written observation and feedback comments provided by experienced mentors; and
- training through the medium of Welsh where required.

Training for schools

Key features of effective mentor training in schools include:

- close links with the training provided by the higher education institution;
- regular updates to staff about college requirements and the standards expected of trainees;
- a thorough introduction to the role and responsibilities of mentor; and
- monitoring by the senior staff from the school and the partner higher education institution.

Examples of good practice in mentor training

Case study 3:
effective mentor
training by the
higher education
institution

Two college tutors provide mentor training for all the teachers in one partner school. During the training, staff become familiar with the requirements of the partnership. They develop a good understanding of their role as mentors and establish a system for moderating the work of the trainees in their school. In exchange, the headteacher provides a very useful session for trainees in the higher education institution on assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' progress.

Key features include:

- all school staff become familiar with the requirements of the partnership;
- the headteacher makes a valuable contribution to the college-based course;
- recognition of the need for mentors to introduce a system for moderating their assessment of teaching; and
- evaluation that is used to update information.

Case study 4:
well targeted
mentor training

One higher education institution organises a training session for mentors on the use of information and communications technology in college-based and school-based work, an issue identified in Estyn inspection reports. The session includes a good quality presentation by college tutors and experienced mentors. As well as developing an understanding of how information and communications technology is included in the core subjects in the college-based course, mentors receive very useful information about relevant websites for use with pupils and trainees in their own schools. As part of the session, a small group of final year trainees outlines their school-based experience of information and communications technology. The trainees' comments highlight the difference in the quality of this aspect of provision between partner schools and help to identify effective practice. Mentors develop a clear understanding of what trainees and college-based staff expect during school placement.

Key features include:

- training which focuses on an area of development and support identified in Estyn inspection reports;
- training provided jointly by mentors, college tutors and trainees;
- helpful information for mentors to use with both trainees and pupils; and
- encouragement to mentors to share information with other teachers in their school.

4. Mentoring in schools

Mentoring as a whole school activity

Effective practice in school-based mentoring often reflects a whole-school commitment to supporting trainee primary teachers. Where schools are committed to the partnership, the mentor's role and the growth of mentoring skills is an important aspect of staff development. In these schools, it is usual for several staff to be trained as mentors. Trainees in schools that work in this way have access not only to their mentor, but also to the expertise of other teachers in the school including those with subject specialisms, co-ordinators and those who demonstrate best practice. Usually, a member of the senior management team organises the mentors in the school, provides trainees with tutoring in pastoral and whole-school aspects and acts as the link with the higher education institution.

Effective mentoring is enhanced in schools where there are well-developed and managed systems in place to plan, monitor and evaluate the work of both mentors and trainees. Such schools have high expectations of the trainees. Staff consider trainees as colleagues and treat them accordingly. In these schools, staff recognise trainees' need for well-targeted support as an important aspect of effective mentoring. In the best practice, headteachers give careful consideration to the needs of pupils, staff and trainees when deciding on the number and frequency of placements their schools can offer.

Features of effective planning for trainees' work in school include:

- an introduction to the school which includes specific documentation about the school, its context, ethos, staffing, procedures and policies and daily routines;
- access to schemes of work, teachers' planning, assessment procedures and resources, including ICT;
- a timetable which enables trainees to observe and teach their chosen specialist age range and gain experience of other year groups in the primary phase;
- planned opportunities to develop a clear understanding of issues related to continuity, progression and transition within and between key stages; and
- a timetable that enables trainees to teach pupils with a range of abilities across the primary curriculum subjects.

Planning for effective mentoring in schools

Most mentors are familiar with elements of the trainees' college-based course. In the best cases, mentors use this information to link college-based and school-based training to provide a coherent and developmental experience in the school for the trainee. In the best cases, the mentor, college tutor and trainee jointly plan and regularly review the school placement to ensure that the trainee's strengths are enhanced and their needs met. The mentor identifies areas for the trainees' development and sets targets from their individual assessment profile.

Many schools have developed good seminar programmes for trainees. These programmes are usually organised and led by the senior member of staff with responsibility for mentoring. This is usually a series of weekly sessions that enable trainees to gain further understanding of whole-school issues, for example equal opportunities, assessment and special educational needs.

Effective support and guidance for trainees

In those schools where mentoring is particularly effective, mentors understand the responsibility they have to provide well-targeted support and guidance to trainees. Mentors are sensitive to trainees' needs, help them to analyse their difficulties and to work out the most effective solutions. Where practice is good, mentors organise regular individual support sessions for trainees. These sessions focus on the week's activities and each trainee's progress in relation to targets set. Mentors provide constructive feedback from their own and others' observation notes and together they and trainees set further targets for the following week. As a result of this support, the best trainees can accurately identify the strengths and shortcomings in their teaching and can evaluate pupils' learning. Trainees can then use this information to help them plan future lessons.

Assuring the quality of assessment

Most mentors observe trainees on a regular basis. Mentors ensure that they provide trainees with a written record of the observation including judgments and targets for improvement. They also provide the trainees with oral feedback on each observation. In the best practice, mentors recognise the need to provide reports which are evaluative and which are clearly related to the standards trainees are expected to achieve. Mentors ensure that the trainees and the link tutor from the higher education institution both receive a copy of the reports.

A number of schools have introduced procedures for moderating their assessment of trainees' achievements. These include joint observation of trainees' teaching by the headteacher or the senior mentor and sometimes senior mentors from other schools.

Examples of good practice

Case study 5:
mentoring which
supports
previously
identified targets

Before meeting a trainee, the mentor reads the information provided by the higher education institution. This includes information on the trainee's background and qualifications as well as a copy of the school report from the previous school experience. This report indicates that the trainee needs to improve her understanding and application of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig in the second school experience. At their first meeting, the mentor asks the trainee to reflect upon her first school experience. On the basis of this information the mentor plans a timetable with key staff in the school. This includes observation and teaching experiences to broaden the trainee's understanding of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.

Case study 6:
mentoring which
identifies and
supports new
targets

In a school with a large number of trainees, the mentor audits the trainees' confidence in, and experience of teaching various aspects of the national curriculum. The mentor organises demonstration lessons in subjects where the trainees lack confidence or prior teaching experience. In this way, good practitioners and subject co-ordinators share their experience effectively. In some cases, the mentor uses videos of good practice instead of demonstration lessons. The audit also identifies a number of trainees as lacking confidence in teaching physical education. The school organises a series of demonstration lessons from across key stage 1 to key stage 2 that exemplify progression in pupils' learning and provide key teaching points. The mentor and trainees discuss issues arising in a follow-up seminar.

Key features include:

- targeted support for trainees based on their individual needs;
- trainees improve at identifying continuity and progression in pupils' learning and apply this to their own teaching; and
- a follow-up seminar session, which provides a good opportunity for trainees to discuss what they have seen.

Case study 7:
effective feedback
and moderating
systems

Mentors in one school give written feedback on nearly all the trainees' lessons. This is in addition to meeting the requirements of the higher education institution. This feedback, on a proforma designed by the school, consists of about five brief sentences and an action point. Mentors feel that the process gives their observations a clear focus and is an efficient use of time. Mentors observe the trainees teaching and make rough notes on the proforma. The trainees appreciate this detailed written feedback that builds into an impressive file of issues. They can then refer back to and reflect upon these later during the experience and back at college. The senior mentor sets up a system to moderate and evaluate the work of mentors and the progress made by trainees in the school. This system of written feedback enables the senior mentor to keep a close check on the quality of the mentors' and the trainees' work. It also ensures that the support provided by mentors is consistent and appropriate.

Key features include:

- regular ongoing written feedback provided for trainees;
- the effective monitoring of trainees' progress by mentors, college tutor and headteacher; and
- the moderation and evaluation of trainees' and mentors' work by the senior mentor ensures consistency in the training provided by the school.

5. The impact of effective mentoring

Participation in mentoring partnerships

In effective mentoring, partnership has a beneficial impact on all those involved. The higher education institution, its partner schools and the trainee primary teachers all gain from effective partnership working. All partners are appreciative of the stimulating dimension that mentoring provides and enjoy the challenge of working in partnership.

The impact of effective mentoring on schools

Participation in mentoring partnerships encourages schools to reflect on and improve their own practice. Staff and pupils benefit from opportunities to share new ideas and initiatives with trainees. Schools also benefit from the subject expertise and prior experiences some trainees bring with them.

Schools have adopted a number of different systems to enable mentors to undertake their role effectively. For example, this may involve the mentor exchanging classes with the class teacher to observe the trainee teaching. The headteacher may also teach the mentor's class so that both class teacher and mentor can support the trainee. Issues identified through joint observation and the subsequent discussions with the trainees contribute to the teacher's own observation skills and to the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Schools use funding transferred from higher education institutions in a variety of ways. Some schools use it to set aside non-contact time for seminars, feedback and review meetings. In others, mentors receive incentive allowance points for their work with trainees.

Schools are increasingly using the skills they have gained from working with trainees to induct newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching. Many use the written guidance they and the higher education institution have produced to support newly qualified teachers. Mentoring skills, developed from involvement in the partnerships, transfer readily to mentoring new members of staff in the school.

The impact of effective partnership on trainees

Well-planned school experiences, closely linked to college-based training and informed by awareness of the trainee's strengths and targets for development ensure early professional development. The standards achieved by trainees improve when feedback identifies clear targets, which improve their teaching and pupils' learning.

Trainees benefit from opportunities to observe or assist with exemplar lessons taught by subject specialists. Where trainees work with children who have special educational needs, mentoring support helps them develop the skills needed to meet these pupils' additional needs, including those who are gifted, talented or have specific learning difficulties. Trainees benefit professionally from an expectation to be fully involved in all aspects of school life. Where they are treated as members of staff, included in staff development programmes and encouraged to meet parents, trainees' gain a better understanding of the role of the teachers and the school in the wider community.

Impact of effective mentoring on mentors

Mentors and classroom teachers benefit and develop professionally from participation in mentoring partnerships. Observing trainees and giving feedback helps all teachers review and reflect upon their own practice. Mentors become more confident and are better able to share information about good practice. They develop their management and interpersonal skills. For many, mentoring has stimulated an interest in participating in higher education and some have gained qualifications at Master's level. An increasing number of staff in schools have secured promotion partly as a result of the skills developed through mentoring. Mentors also gain by working collaboratively with colleagues from other schools to moderate their work with trainees.

As a result of working with trainees, subject co-ordinators also make good use of the skills acquired to improve monitoring of their subject in the school. They encourage trainees and teachers to focus on pupils' learning and attainment and set challenging targets that will raise standards in the subject.

Impact of effective mentoring on higher education institution

Higher education institutions benefit from effective partnership with schools. Joint projects involving school staff and college staff help develop coherence between school-based and college-based training. Opportunities to work together enable all those involved to exchange ideas and information about current teaching methods and learning strategies. Close liaison with partner schools offers college-based staff opportunities to develop and inform their research activities. This research is then used to inform aspects of the college-based course. The increased role of the school mentor in aspects of the college-based course also has benefits for the higher education institution. The sharing of good practice, new ideas and school-based initiatives all serve to keep the higher education institution fully informed about the current day-to-day practices and procedures in its partner schools. Where the impact of the partnership is particularly successful this extends to a fuller role for the mentor who may, for example, participate in interviewing applicants for teacher training, course planning and evaluation and course and examination board meetings.

Examples of the impact of effective mentoring

Case study 8: evaluation of partnership practice

Detailed information collected from mentors, trainees, college link tutors and external examiners' reports, has enabled one higher education institution to produce a detailed evaluation of the partnership presented as a booklet. This evaluation booklet clearly outlines the strengths of the partnership and identifies key areas for improvement. Both the higher education institution and partner schools have made good use of the booklet to improve partnership practice.

Key features include:

- detailed evaluation of the provision involving all members of the partnership;
- clear identification of strengths and areas for improvement; and
- joint evaluation of the outcomes within the partnership and action taken to improve provision.

Case study 9:
training for small
rural partner
schools

Staff from partner schools located a long way from the higher education institution; especially those from small schools have difficulty attending regular mentor training sessions. One higher education institution has recently started a project supported by HEFCW to produce a bilingual training pack that can be used to train staff in a cluster of schools. Groups of schools and the higher education institution formed a local partnership steering committee and worked together to develop different sections of the pack. Each section will be trialled in partner schools and evaluated by an external assessor prior to publication.

Key features include:

- creative thinking in meeting the needs of staff in partner schools located a long way from the higher education institution;
- materials produced jointly by college-based and school-based staff;
- the production of bilingual training materials; and
- clear monitoring and evaluation procedures to access the quality of the training pack.

6. The way forward

In order to improve the quality of mentoring in primary teacher training and increase the impact of mentoring, there is a need to ensure that:

- procedures for evaluating school-based training are consistently used to maintain high standards across schools. This should include:
 - evaluation of the impact of mentor training sessions;
 - monitoring the effectiveness of mentors' work;
 - providing rigorous feedback to mentors on how well they undertake their role; and
 - monitoring and evaluating the trainees' school-based experiences;
- mentors are more involved in planning, delivering, managing and particularly, in monitoring and evaluating the college-based course;
- all staff who mentor trainees receive appropriate initial and regular ongoing training that builds on what they already know and can do and includes opportunities to share good practice;
- schools receive enough information about trainees' previous experience and performance;
- mentors set clear and measurable targets for trainees to improve their performance;
- mentors' feedback to trainees focuses on pupils' learning as well as the quality of the trainee's teaching;
- mentors support trainees in learning to make accurate assessments of pupils' learning;
- higher education institutions encourage schools to introduce procedures for moderating trainees' progress through, for example, paired lesson observations;
- schools and higher education institutions give enough time to mentors and tutors to enable them to undertake their role effectively;
- trainees have more opportunities to observe good practice in partner schools and schools make better use of the skills and expertise of trainees during their school experience;
- changes to partnership requirements are clearly documented to avoid inconsistencies in the training within and between schools; and
- written guidance for mentors in Welsh-medium schools is provided bilingually.

