

ITT Case Study:

Successful Lead Mentoring at Horton Grange Primary School



Horton Grange Primary has developed a strong partnership with its Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provider, ensuring a robust and effective training environment for trainee teachers. Central to this success is the role of the Lead Mentor, who plays a pivotal role in the training process. This case study examines the responsibilities of the Lead Mentor, and the benefits derived from this role, and offers practical tips for those looking to excel as Lead Mentors.

About the role

Each ITT provider allocates a Lead Mentor to support the delivery of their ITT course. At Horton Grange Primary, the Lead Mentor's role is comprehensive, ensuring a structured and supportive environment for both mentors and trainees.

- **Quality assurance and training support:** The Lead Mentor works closely with the ITT provider's Class Based Mentor (CBM) to ensure high-quality assessments and instructional coaching sessions. This involves providing training and support to maintain the standards expected from the ITT programme.
- **Assessment framework support:** Assisting the CBM in using the Assessment Framework effectively, the Lead Mentor ensures that all assessments are accurate and supportive of trainee development.
- **Ensuring ITT teacher entitlement:** The Lead Mentor ensures that all ITT teachers receive their entitled support. When issues arise, they collaborate with the CBM and school to find solutions.
- **Moderating expectations and feedback:** Through joint observations with the CBM, the Lead Mentor helps maintain consistent expectations and provides feedback to both ITT teachers and mentors, supporting their next steps.
- **Cross-partnership work:** Engaging in joint visits and cross-partnership activities with other Lead Mentors ensures consistency in training experiences and best practices across the network.
- **Monitoring progress and welfare:** The Lead Mentor monitors the progress and welfare of each ITT teacher, offering additional support when necessary to ensure their success and well-being.
- **Communication and problem-solving:** In cases where an ITT teacher is not on track, the Lead Mentor communicates with the ITT Leadership Team to implement an Individual Recovery Plan (IRP).
- **Quality assurance documentation:** Completing short QA forms at each review point and comprehensive School Summary Reports ensures thorough documentation of progress and areas for improvement.
- **Target setting and review:** The Lead Mentor reviews and sets targets, provides feedback on documentation, and addresses any concerns during key review points.
- **Management group meetings:** Contributing to discussions in Management Group Meetings, the Lead Mentor helps shape the overall strategy and implementation of the ITT programme.
- **Key review points leadership:** Leading key review points at various stages of the programme, the Lead Mentor ensures that progress is consistently tracked and supported.
- **Travel and flexibility:** Traveling across the partnership for key review visits, the Lead Mentor's role requires flexibility and dedicated time away from regular school duties.

Why be a Lead Mentor?

The role of a Lead Mentor offers numerous benefits, making it an attractive and rewarding position within the school.

‘Being a Lead Mentor is very rewarding. It is a pleasure to see the journey that the trainees embarks on throughout their year as a trainee teacher. As a Lead Mentor you can work in partnership with lots of different schools providing different perspectives on teaching and learning making it beneficial for your own CPD’.

Natalie Blott, Assistant Headteacher

- **Talent identification and growth:** Lead Mentors play a crucial role in identifying and nurturing future talent, helping to grow the school’s own staff.
- **Supporting the trust’s vision and ethos:** As part of an academy trust, the Lead Mentor at Horton Grange helps reinforce and support the overarching vision and ethos of the trust.
- **Retention of trained teachers:** Investing time and effort in mentoring trainees increases the likelihood of retaining them as long-term staff members.
- **Leadership progression:** Trainees mentored at Horton Grange often progress into leadership roles, contributing to the school’s leadership capacity.

‘We have many staff who trained through our SCITT programme who have since progressed into TLR positions in school. We are very much about providing support and CPD for aspiring leaders and very much encourage our ECT’s to aspire to be future leaders’.

- **Satisfaction and fulfilment:** Witnessing the progression and development of trainees provides immense satisfaction and a sense of achievement.
- **Expertise in ITT programmes:** Horton Grange’s Lead Mentor gains in-depth knowledge of the ITT programme, enabling them to support school-based mentors effectively.
- **Bespoke training opportunities:** Lead Mentors, mentors, and trainees benefit from bespoke training provided by the ITT provider, enhancing in-house CPD.

‘Throughout my time being a Lead Mentor I have had lots of Enhanced CPD opportunities. More recently I have received bespoke CPD around instructional coaching and just completed the NQPLTD’.

- **Professional growth and networking:** Opportunities for joint observations, shared practices across the trust, and networking with other professionals aid continuous professional growth.
- **Developed expertise in teacher development:** The role contributes to developing expertise in teacher development, often linked to further qualifications such as the NPQLTD.

Top tips for being an effective Lead Mentor

1. **Share the load:** Collaborate closely with school-based mentors to distribute responsibilities evenly and support each other.

'As a Lead Mentor, you work closely with the CBM, quality-assuring but also providing training and CPD opportunities'

2. **Regular check-ins:** Maintain frequent communication with mentors and trainees to monitor progress and address any issues promptly.

'In my role as a Lead mentor, I regularly communicate with the CMB. This is done at the various review points throughout the year. I am always on hand for a telephone call or quick email should questions arise'

3. **Establish professional relationships early:** Build honest, professional relationships with trainees and mentors from the start, setting clear expectations and fostering open communication.

'Effective working relationships are an important part of being a Lead Mentor. It is important that the trainees and CBM's feel that you are approachable and willing to support throughout the year'

4. **Agree on submission timelines and methods:** Clarify when and how trainees should submit lesson plans and other materials to manage workloads effectively and ensure timely feedback.

5. **Maintain weekly mentor meeting records:** Ensure that trainees keep accurate records of their mentor meetings, reflecting on their targets and progress.

6. **Be the ITT champion in school:** Advocate for trainees and mentors within the school, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.

'Staff and trainees in my school know that no question is too small. I have an open-door policy and I am always willing to support in any way possible with ITT'

7. **Network with other Lead Mentors:** Engage with other Lead Mentors to share best practices and ensure consistency across different placements and schools.

'This is an important part of the role and provides some quality assurance for the Lead Mentors. It is great to work collaboratively, sharing best practice and ensuring consistency across schools'

8. **Take small steps:** Set short-term, achievable targets for trainees, allowing them to build their skills and confidence gradually.

These strategies have enabled the Lead Mentor at Horton Grange Primary to create a nurturing and effective training environment, contributing to the success and professional growth of trainee teachers.

Find out more at www.bradfordteaching.org