

Communication to Partners: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Colleague,

Once again, we write to you during these unprecedented times, in the hope that you, your families and your staff in school are keeping safe and well.

### **Sincere Thanks**

We thank you sincerely for the feedback we have received from many of our partners since our last communication. This has helped us significantly in planning some of the scenarios we may face in the autumn term and in restructuring our placement expectations in order to complement the measures you may be putting in place at your setting.

We recognise that we are writing to you at possibly the most challenging time school leaders have ever faced. We are very much aware across our partnership of just how hard schools have been working to meet the needs of their pupils and staff whilst dealing with daily updates and guidance from the DFE. We are also very aware that a request to support ITE is a difficult one in addition to everything else you are facing. We recognise that there will need to be a great deal of flexibility in the coming year to ensure safe practice whilst maintaining the high quality of teacher education that has been our hallmark over the years through the excellent partnerships built up with you, our schools.

Our senior management team have continued to meet regularly in order to discuss our plans moving forward. During our meetings we have considered your feedback very carefully and taken on board some of the strategies you are planning to adopt, whilst recognising the uncertainty that the current situation has generated. Some of the decisions that have been made by the university continue to be fluid as the external environment changes but we can now share the latest version of our placement calendar for 2020-21 with you.

### **Changes to the Placement Calendar**

We have made significant changes to the Professional Placement Calendar for 2020-21 to allow our partners, and the university, more flexibility in establishing risk assessments and a new way of working for staff, trainees and, most importantly, the children. Please see a copy of this attached. If you have already requested trainees for the new academic year, we will write to you separately to discuss your allocation and any changes that need to be made because of this.

In addition to adjusting placements so that they begin after half term, we have also reduced the commitment to attachment days significantly. We hope that this will establish slightly more continuity in the format of the placements and reduce the number of people our trainees are encountering externally whilst working at your school.

We recognise that having additional adults in the classroom would also be of benefit to you and, as such, have decided to 'pair-up' first year trainees so that you could have additional help within classroom bubbles. We have also reduced the percentage of teaching time for this cohort as well as relaxing expectations in terms of weekly observations and the

completion of documentation. We hope that this will go some way in supporting you and ensuring more capacity and more flexibility in the classroom.

All trainees will have 'Preparation for Placement' embedded into their timetable at the beginning of the new academic year. This will focus on health and safety and understanding the new school environment, so that we can help to prepare them for the significantly changed procedures in our schools. We hope you will be reassured by this and if there is anything you would like us to include specifically please do let us know.

### **Thank you for your Continued Support**

We realise it will be difficult for partner schools to balance the additional needs and demands in the immediate future and we really do appreciate that. However, during this time of rapid change, we will still need to educate a strong cohort of well qualified new teachers to continue to provide excellent, enthusiastic input for our children.

Teaching remains an attractive career choice for many and we have already recruited a high number of strong applicants who are keen to start in the new academic year. We have been clear to warn them that this year will be exceptional in terms of what their training will involve. They are aware that how schools will be operating is not clear, and will vary according to the context and circumstances each setting faces. This has also been recognised by the DFE who have amended the ITE criteria to take account of potential challenges.

As system leaders you have a critical role in the quality of Initial Teacher Education. Your decision to support providers in guaranteeing the next generation of teachers is crucially significant and we cannot do this without you. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further if you have suggestions as to how we improve ITE and how we ensure that the new cohort of eager trainee teachers begin to develop the skills and understanding they need to teach your pupils. Do get in touch with us and an appropriate member of the team will contact you directly via phone or Zoom, whichever you would prefer. In the meantime, we look forward to receiving your placement requests as soon as you are able, if you have not already submitted them.

### **Keeping in Touch**

We will continue to update you with developments at the university and ask that you do the same so that we can continue to ensure that our strategies complement those of your setting. Importantly we will continue to put the health and wellbeing of our staff, students and partners at the forefront of any decisions we make.

Stay safe and well and thank you for all you do in supporting the education of our children and the next generation of teachers.

Best wishes,

Louise

Louise Daley  
Head of Professional Formation