

Stockton-on-Tees Teacher Training Partnership 2021-22

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Policy Updated: August 2021
Next Review: July 2022
Key person: KW

Partnership Vision

We are a dynamic, mutually supportive partnership whose aim is to attract and recruit the best calibre of trainees possible in order to provide ambitious and committed teaching professionals for Stockton and the wider Tees Valley. This supports Stockton's drive to maintain high educational standards and ensure a sustainable supply of teachers ready to teach in Stockton and beyond.

A drive for sustainable excellent provision at all levels remains a continuous focus for SCITT leaders who are ambitious for their trainees and the growth of the partnership. The unremitting focus on excellence in trainee recruitment, provision and outcomes, underpinned by personalised support, for both trainees and schools, leads to highly employable trainees who are sought after by schools because of the rigorous, high quality training they have undertaken. Ultimately, it is the young people in Stockton and beyond who benefit from this.

Entry Criteria

GCSEs

- GCSE Grade C/4+ or equivalent Maths*
- GCSE Grade C/4+ or equivalent English Language/English*
- GCSE Science Grade C/4+ or equivalent Science (primary candidates only)*

*Functional skills and Access to Higher Education qualifications are not considered GCSE equivalent

Degree

- Undergraduate degree 2:2 or above. For primary this can be in any discipline; for secondary it is preferable for the degree to be in the subject a candidate wishes to teach or to have a tangible connection to the subject they wish to teach. Where this is not the case, high grade A level qualifications in the subject they wish to teach would be taken into account; Grade A*-B. A master's degree related to the subject they wish to teach may also be taken into account.
- A third or below is not advertised on the website, however we do consider these on a case-by-case basis, particularly when a partnership school endorses the candidate.

We are members of ENIC and use this service to compare international qualifications with the English system.

Recruitment to Programme/Withdrawal of Places

During recruitment and selection, SCITT may temporarily or permanently close recruitment to a particular route if their assessment is that the course is full or if they no longer have the capacity to provide high quality Teacher Training for the particular route/subject concerned.

Regrettably, occasionally, SCITT may withdraw the offer of a place where the anticipated placement cannot be fulfilled, despite the best efforts of SCITT. In those rare cases, SCITT will endeavour to place the trainee with another local SCITT and/or offer the opportunity to defer to the next training year. However, even where the candidate defers, it may not be possible to provide the placement and therefore SCITT will very reluctantly not be able to reinstate the place.

The Selection Process

Candidates can only be considered upon receipt of an Apply application form. This applies to both prospective core trainees and apprentices.

Stage One Qualifications Check

Upon receipt of an application form, the following procedure is followed:

- A candidate folder is created by SCITT admin, held within a secure Recruitment folder
- SCITT admin carry out the initial scrutiny for qualification checks.
- We aim to complete this check on the day the application is received.

Stage Two Scrutiny of Applications

- We aim to complete this check on the day the application is received.
- One SCITT lead scrutinises the application against set criteria:
 - Demonstrates a rationale for and desire to teach
 - Evidence of skills relevant to working with young people*
 - Demonstrates understanding of the rewards and challenges of teaching
 - Fundamental English - written
- Each criterion attracts a score between 0 and 5.
 - Any application that scores less than 12 points is automatically rejected.
 - Any application that scores between 12 and 14 will be considered borderline and be reviewed again by both assessors before a decision is made.
 - Any application that scores above 14 is automatically accepted and invited for interview.
- There are a number of possible risk factors identified as part of the scrutiny that can inform the decision whether to interview when an application is considered borderline. No risk factor in itself is a barrier but the cumulative total of risk factors should be taken into account when determining if a candidate should be offered an interview:
 - Subject knowledge
 - Fundamental English
 - Career changer
 - School experience*
 - Low GCSE grades
 - 2:2
 - Mental health
 - Learning disability
 - References

*Please note that school experience is not a criterion for selection, though it can enhance an application.

- Each application is moderated by the other SCITT lead before a final decision is made.
- If an application is rejected, candidates are provided with a rationale for the decision.
- SCITT admin arranges the interview requesting school representation where possible.

Stage 3 Interview

Face to Face

- All face-to-face interviews take place in schools.
- Interviews are conducted by a partnership school representative and a SCITT lead.
- Candidates' application forms are shared with the school interviewer prior to interview with the clear instruction to delete following the interview.

- Candidates are asked to prepare a teaching experience of approximately 20 minutes which they deliver to a pre-identified group of pupils, observed by a SCITT lead and school interviewer. Use of IT is not encouraged to avoid the challenges of equipment breakdown.
- A formal interview consisting of 8 questions is conducted – answers are recorded by both interviewers.
- A data task is completed on site. Candidates are provided with a calculator and given as much time as they need to complete the task.
- For primary candidates only, the school council conducts a further informal interview hosted by a member of staff appointed by the partnership school or by the SCITT lead and partnership school interviewer; schools and council members devise their own questions.
- Scoring is undertaken jointly by the SCITT lead and partnership school interviewer.
- Where there is disagreement about the final outcome, the Partnership Manager reserves the right to make the final decision, taking into account the views of the partnership school and the SCITT interviewer. Where the Partnership Manager is the interviewer, the Deputy SCITT Manager will make the final decision.

Virtual Interviews

- Virtual interviews were introduced due to COVID disruption in March 2020 and will be retained as an option for 2022 recruitment.
- Interviews have largely been conducted by SCITT leads only, though, where possible, partnership school representatives will be involved.
- Where a school interviewer is involved, candidates' application forms are shared with the school interviewer prior to interview with the clear instruction to delete following the interview

The Virtual Process

- Interviews are conducted via Zoom.
- Candidates are asked to prepare a teaching experience of approximately 20 minutes which they then talk through with the interviewer(s). The intention is to understand the candidate's thinking behind the task.
- A formal interview consisting of 8 questions is conducted – answers are recorded by both interviewers.
- A data task is completed in the trainee's own time. Candidates are advised they can use a calculator and can take as much time as they need to.
- Where a partnership school representative is included, scoring is undertaken jointly.
- Interviewers may let a candidate know they intend to offer a place at the end of the interview but make it clear no formal offer can be made until the return of the data task.
- Where there is disagreement about the final outcome, the Partnership Manager reserves the right to make the final decision, taking into account the views of the partnership school and the SCITT interviewer. Where the Partnership Manager is the interviewer, the Deputy SCITT Manager will make the final decision.

For all interviews, whether face to face or virtual, the interviewers are looking for:

- An ability to receive constructive feedback in a mature way
- Resilience when under pressure
- Intellectual capacity, including the ability to critically reflect
- Realistic expectations of the teaching profession
- Communication skills -particularly the use of Standard English
- Subject knowledge and expertise
- The candidate's personal values
- The candidate's attitude towards children and young people

Scoring

- Each question has set criteria against which all interviewers score.
 - Any application that scores 34 points or less is automatically rejected.
 - Any application that scores between 35 and 41 will be considered borderline and be reviewed again against the risk factors before a decision is made.
 - Any application that scores 42 or above is automatically accepted and offered a place.
- Scores are converted into percentages and recorded on the recruitment spreadsheet for future analysis.

Offers/Rejections

- We aim to complete this on the day of interview wherever possible.
- SCITT admin carry out this task.
- Formal offers are directed through the Apply site.
- SCITT may send an email to a successful candidate informing them that we have made an offer to them and explaining why we would like to work with them. However, at no time is a trainee guided to accept our offer in preference to another provider's offer. Their right to wait for contact/interviews from all providers and then decide is made clear by the SCITT lead as part of discussions with the candidate at interview.
- Where a candidate is rejected, a rationale is provided.

Fundamental English and Maths

An initial assessment of written English is undertaken as a separate element of Stage 2 scrutiny of applications. Spoken English is assessed as a separate element arising out of the interview questions/teaching activity and as an element of the data task scoring.

A basic assessment of fundamental maths is undertaken through the data task, where trainees are required to calculate percentages and averages based upon an interpretation of a set of class data as well as analyse the class data to identify patterns.

Neither is a 'deal breaker' individually, but is considered, particularly where a trainee's score falls into the borderline zone. Relevant information will be included on the trainee's initial needs plan shared with both mentors and trainees at the start of the training year.

Right of Appeal (Fitness to Practise Policy: Trainee Conduct, Complaints and Appeals pg. 12)

Applicants are able to appeal against application and interview decisions. There are three stages to any appeal. It should be noted that the dispute of academic or professional judgements is not possible under the appeal system. However, applicants may appeal on the grounds that:

- There has been a procedural irregularity. A situation where the applicant believes that the SCITT has not adhered to its own stated policy and procedures.
- The emergence of new material which may have affected the decision. It must be made clear by the applicant as to why this information was not made available at the time of application and/or interview. It should be noted that if this information was available at the time of application and/or interview but not included, for any reason, it will not be considered as new information.
- Evidence of bias or prejudice - any formal appeal must be submitted, in writing, by the applicant within 15 working days of the decision.

Stage 1: Written feedback. All unsuccessful candidates will have received feedback on their application. For those candidates unsuccessful at the point of application, this information will be put onto the Apply portal. Further feedback can be given to clarify the reasoning. This feedback will be provided by email. Requests for such feedback should be sent to scitt@stockton.gov.uk.

Stage 2: Any applicant who wishes to lodge an appeal against a decision is asked to do so, in writing, within 10 working days of the application decision. The SCITT Partnership Manager will respond and an independent appeals panel comprising experienced interviewers not involved in the original selection process will be convened to look over the trainee documentation and make an assessment decision. The SCITT Programme Manager and the independent appeals panel will normally respond within 15 working days from receipt of the appeal.

Stage 3: Should the applicant be able to clearly demonstrate that the independent appeals panel has not addressed the grounds of the appeal or has not fully understood the appeal, the applicant must contact the SCITT Partnership Manager within 15 working days of the stage 2 decision via scitt@stockton.gov.uk. The SCITT Partnership Manager will pass the complaint on to a representative of SMB who will assess the argument and pass decision on the grounds for the appeal. On completion of this decision, the applicant will be issued with a Complaints of Procedures letter making the decision final.

If the appeal is successful, the applicant will be allowed an interview/entry on to the course as applicable.

Safer Recruitment

Both the SCITT leads are Safer Recruitment trained (May 2018). At least one SCITT lead attends every interview.

We operate Safer Recruitment practices and, as such, this is written into all key communication with prospective trainees as well as on our website/email signatures. Interview questions are written to comply with safer recruitment good practice; any gaps in employment are identified and prospective trainees required to explain any such gaps.

At interview, every applicant must provide two forms of ID, at least one of which should be photographic. When recruitment is face to face, the interviewers take a copy of the ID; when interviews are virtual, the candidate holds one form of photographic ID up to the screen and then emails a copy alongside their data task the same day. This documentation is stored in a secure area of the shared drive and only retained should the candidate be offered and accepts a place on the programme. SCITT admin will then ask for an additional form of ID as part of pre-induction processes. The new trainees must then show a physical copy of ID to SCITT admin, as additional confirmation; this often dovetails with the DBS process.

Reference Checks

In most cases, we don't accept references from personal email addresses. In these cases, we seek to obtain an organisational address for that referee or, alternatively, confirmation of the referee's position/previous position with that organisation where appropriate. Personal/character references are not accepted. In these cases, we will contact the candidate to seek a more appropriate referee.

Suitability Checks

Prior to being given an unconditional offer to train with Stockton-on-Tees Teacher Training Partnership, all prospective core trainees are required to undergo a series of safeguarding checks. These checks are:

- Enhanced DBS check – undertaken no earlier than 3 months prior to the commencement of training.
- Overseas checks for those who have lived or worked overseas for 3 months or more in the last 10 years
- Prohibition Order check

SCITT receives the DBS certificate outcome from the online check. This confirms the certificate number, the issue date and level of check. Upon request, the SCITT will provide schools with trainees' DBS numbers where the trainee has signed to give the SCITT permission to share the information. All trainees are requested to provide this written permission on the first day of the programme. Apprentice checks are undertaken by their employing schools, rather than SCITT. Apprentices are required to share their DBS number with SCITT prior to commencing the programme.

On the rare occasion where a trainee's DBS check takes longer than expected and the programme has begun, the trainee's placement school is informed so that they can put their regulations into place regarding visitors without DBS clearance. The trainee must be escorted in school at all times until the DBS clearance is obtained.

The SCITT confirms with schools via email to Headteachers and Training Coordinators that all trainees have undergone the checks mentioned above.

Please Note:

- New core trainees on the 3-7 programme are required to sign a declaration that they are not disqualified from working with children under the Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018.
- SCITT maintains a Single Central Record where records and confirmation of DBS checks, overseas checks and reference checks are maintained.
- For apprentices, the employing school carries out these checks. We do record their DBS information on the Single Central Record.
- Where a trainee discloses or where a DBS reveals a criminal record, the partnership will convene a confidential DBS Disclosure Panel, made up of representatives from partnership schools; normally representatives will be drawn from the Strategic Management Board. This Board will consider the circumstances and be the final arbiter of whether the trainee can be offered a place on the programme.
- SCITT must maintain confidentiality, however the trainee will be encouraged to share the information with the head teacher of their placement school.
- Applicant data is stored electronically on a secure drive in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR regulations.

Post Interview Process

Stockton SCITT will remain in contact with all candidates who have accepted a place and they will be invited to the pre course induction in July prior to registration on the programme in September. SCITT admin will check that each trainee has fulfilled the conditions of their offer on the SCITT programme registration date.

Two Welcome Packs are sent to all accepted candidates ahead of the training year:

Welcome Pack One sent late March/early April:

- Welcome letter including a request for GCSE and Degree certificates
- Privacy Statement and guidance for completion
- Stockton SCITT Privacy Notice
- Confirmation of the pre-course induction date
- Information regarding CPSQ

Welcome Pack Two sent June:

- Link to access the health questionnaire
- Arrangements to complete the DBS check
- Arrangements to attend the Education Centre to present sight documentation (e.g., certificates and ID)

Equality and Diversity

Our purpose, as outlined in our Partnership Vision (pg. 1) is to attract and recruit the best calibre of trainees. Recruitment of high-quality trainees is crucial to the supply of excellent teachers therefore we welcome applicants from a range of backgrounds. We are committed to promoting diversity and practising equality of opportunity, paying due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the 9 protected characteristics.

Recruitment procedures promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination. For all candidates offered an interview, they are asked if any adjustments are required to access the interview to ensure that our provision does not place any applicant at a disadvantage.

Candidates are sent the Trainee Teacher Role Description and Trainee Teacher Person Specification as part of the invitation to ensure they have a realistic understanding of the expectations of training to teach.

Where trainees do disclose a disability/learning need, SCITT leaders may discuss anticipated needs during the interview. This is done primarily to determine initial needs and support, however, if there is evidence suggesting fitness to train to teach is in question due to a disclosed need, this will be considered. In these circumstances, SCITT leaders may seek additional information and require a candidate to undertake our medical health questionnaire before deciding to offer a place.

Reasonable Adjustments

Trainees who accept a place on our programme are required to complete a Corazon Health medical questionnaire to determine fitness to train to teach. Trainees are not required to disclose a disability or learning need. Where trainees do disclose, as part of the post-recruitment process or as part of the application process, a one-to-one discussion is held with the trainee to understand the condition and identify any reasonable adjustments that can be made. As part of that discussion, SCITT will make it clear where adjustments can be made for training purposes but may not be considered reasonable for the purposes of employment.

Membership of MERIT

We are members of MERIT, a north-east based organisation that partners with a group of ITT providers to support people from a BAME background to go into teaching. We meet annually and share information with the organisation to support queries they receive from prospective trainees. This service is advertised on our website as well as invitation to interview correspondence.