For more than 60 years, initial teacher education has been the foundation of our work in the School of Education.

The hallmark of our approach is our commitment to providing high-quality opportunities that enable students to become outstanding teachers with the knowledge, skills and attributes to raise the educational outcomes for all children.

Central to that is our close partnership with schools. Every year, students following our Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course take up practical teaching placements in schools across the City of Leicester, Leicestershire and neighbouring counties. This experience makes a fundamental difference to their learning and to their growing confidence as teachers.

The benefits of hosting PGCE placements

Welcoming and supporting PGCE students on practical teaching placements brings significant benefits not only for the student but for the whole school.

- We recruit high quality applicants with clear potential to become successful teachers; 98% of students who graduated in 2016 were good or outstanding. So we’re confident that our student teachers will bring the kind of dedication, high ambitions and willingness to learn that you’d look for in any member of your own staff.

- Our students come from very diverse backgrounds, including those fresh out of university, experienced teaching assistants and career changers; their enthusiasm and unique experiences will help to enhance your teaching community and add a new dimension to your pupils’ learning.

- Building the mentoring skills of your own staff is an excellent way of supporting individual development and also brings positive benefits for the wider school, not least by encouraging a culture of aspiration where expectations of pupil progress and professional development are high, and where reflective and collaborative approaches encourage the sharing of practice.

- At the end of the course almost two thirds of our students take up posts in Leicester or Leicestershire, often in schools that have supported their training – so hosting placements can be a great recruitment strategy.

- In addition to the practical support we offer to ITE coordinators and mentors, we also make a payment of £563 for each student who takes up a placement with your school.

The PGCE student has been hugely enthusiastic from day one and the students have got a lot out of his passion and enthusiasm for the subject and enjoyed the sense of fun he tries to bring to his teaching.

Made me re-evaluate areas of my own practice that I wouldn’t necessarily look at.
Hosting PGCE student placements

Every year, around April time, we write to schools to invite them to offer school experience placements for PGCE students starting their course the following September.

School-based placements are arranged in two blocks of nine and twelve weeks, providing the practical teaching experience students need to complete the course and qualify as new teachers. Schools may offer a placement for a PGCE student, or students, for one or both of the placements in one or more of the following subject areas:

- Citizenship
- English
- Geography
- History
- Mathematics
- Modern Languages (French and Spanish in particular)
- Religious Studies/Education
- Science (specialisms in Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Physics with Mathematics)
- Social Science (Psychology and Sociology)

We’re looking for a range of placements to ensure students experience a variety of learning contexts and environments and have the opportunity to teach at KS3, KS4 and post-16.

If your school is selected to host a PGCE placement, we’ll ask you to identify a member of staff, usually someone from your senior leadership team, to coordinate all aspects of initial teacher education (ITE) in your school. The ITE coordinator is the first point of contact for all communications with the University and has specific responsibility for ensuring the student’s overall programme of work and for identifying an experienced teacher from the appropriate subject department to act as the student’s mentor.

It’s the mentor’s role to construct the timetable for the student as well as support, monitor and assess their professional progress throughout the placement, including:

- formal and regular observation of the student teaching and provision of written and verbal feedback
- formal weekly review meetings to support students’ professional development
- submission of interim and summative assessment reports to the University

We’ll discuss and agree the student’s individual development needs before the placement starts and assign a visiting tutor from the University to provide ongoing support for the student and mentor once the placement is under way to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Supporting your school and our students

We offer lots of guidance and support to develop the mentoring skills of your own teaching staff and deliver a high-quality placement experience that benefits both the student and your school, including:

- dedicated support from our Partnership Team, including help with training documentation, administration and organisation of placements, processing of payments and mentor expenses and speedy resolution of any emerging issues or challenges.
- The Partnership Team also leads on matching students to placement offers and coordinates training for mentors and ITE coordinators; the team will be your constant point of contact for anything relating to your involvement in the PGCE Partnership

- a comprehensive handbook for use by students, coordinators, mentors and visiting University tutors that clearly sets out the requirements, roles and responsibilities relating to each teaching placement
- regular University-based meetings that support the professional development of coordinators and mentors by providing opportunities to network, share practice and learn about the systems and processes involved in hosting, monitoring and assessing student teachers.

Dates of placements for 2017-18

ITE Coordinators’ Conference: 16 October, 2017

Phase A teaching experience placement

Duration: 9 weeks

Focus: Focuses on building students’ confidence in the classroom, so that, by the end of the placement, they’ll be comfortable teaching up to 50% of an NQT’s timetable.

Subject mentor briefing/training: 10 October (3pm – 6 pm in subject groups)

Preliminary visits to the school: 24 – 25 October plus 31 October – 1 November (dependent on dates of school half term)

Placement: 6 November – 26 January

Phase B teaching experience placement

Duration: 12 weeks

Focus: By the end of this placement, students should be teaching up to 70% of an NQT’s timetable.

Subject mentor briefing/training: 22 February (3pm – 6 pm in subject groups)

Preliminary visits to the school: 26 – 27 February plus 6 – 7 March (dependent on dates of school half term)

Placement: 12 March – 22 June

Case study

Kate, Geography teacher and PGCE mentor, Sir Jonathan North Community College

The role of the mentor

One of the first things I do is to put together a timetable of teaching hours for each week, making sure I include a good mix of ages as well as opportunities to get experience of teaching other subjects across the faculty. I’ll also add some Key Stage 4 team teaching and, as the placement progresses, bring in opportunities to go on school trips – vital experience for any good geographer!

I’ll meet with student teachers at least once a week to look at what’s coming up, provide feedback on lesson plans, discuss their ongoing development needs and talk about targets.

Relationship with the University

The support from the University has been great. The team there is really approachable, the training prior to each placement provides lots of helpful information and, if I have any concerns or need some advice, there’s always someone available at the end of a phone or on email. I also have a really good relationship with the University tutor who visits PGCE students during their time with us and have had lots of support from the school’s ITE coordinator.

Best thing about being a mentor

Being a mentor has been fantastic for me. It’s enabled me to promote a subject that I love and to help give PGCE students the skills and confidence to become fantastic geography teachers themselves. I also feel I’ve played a part in securing the future supply of teachers for our region, which makes me feel really proud.

Mentoring is great professional development too, not least because it makes you reflect on your own practice. Student teachers come with lots of ideas and different techniques they want to try out and are often very aware of their different backgrounds and life experiences. And they’re all always full of enthusiasm – all of which helps reenergise you! Introducing that kind of variety and diversity into the classroom is also good for our pupils.

Advice to schools thinking about hosting a PGCE student

You need to make sure you have staff who are willing and able to commit the time to do it – but if that’s in place, definitely go for it! Supporting the next generation of teachers is a really worthwhile thing to do and your school will get a lot out of it too. It’s also a great way of talent spotting future employees!

Kate’s top tips for first-time mentors

1. Put yourself in their shoes – the things you do naturally day-to-day are things your students will need some advice, there’s always someone who can help
2. Give as much information as you can without overloading – providing a timetable early on can really help students feel settled
3. Make sure you’re available – I put time aside for regular meetings and give student teachers my mobile number so they can contact me if there are any problems

4. Make sure they have the resources they need – whether it’s a key to a room or handouts for a lesson, helping students feel prepared can really reduce stress
5. Set high expectations – students need to know they’ll be treated like a member of staff from day one and that pupils will respond to them as they do to any professional member of the team
6. Involve them – inviting students to meetings, to join you in the staff room or to come along to social events will help them feel part of your teaching community
7. Be a role model – I give students plenty of opportunities to observe me so they can see and understand the kind of professional standards they need to aspire to
8. Ask for support if you need it – whether it’s the University’s Partnership Office, a University tutor, your ITE coordinator or a mentor in another school, there’s always someone who can help
9. Make sure you have plenty of chocolate/lollipops/boxes of tissues on hand – sometimes, things can feel a bit overwhelming for your student teacher, so it helps to be prepared!
Other ways to get involved in the PGCE Secondary Partnership

In addition to hosting teaching placements, there are a number of ways in which your school can work in partnership with the University of Leicester to help develop and support future teachers.

Supporting the recruitment of PGCE candidates: Every year we ask ITE coordinators and mentors from our partner schools to be involved in our recruitment process and attend interviews of potential PGCE students.

Becoming a School Direct lead school: If you’re interested in offering your own teacher training route by becoming a School Direct lead school, we can provide lots of practical tips and advice to help you get up and running. We have substantial experience as a School Direct partner and offer a range of different options for working together to deliver a successful teacher training programme.

Joining our Partnership Management Group (PMG): The PMG, which meets termly, takes a central role in the strategic development of the University of Leicester PGCE and is made up of secondary headteachers, ITE coordinators and members of the PGCE Secondary tutor team.

Why partner with the University of Leicester?

Reputation and experience: Our PGCE has a long-established and well-deserved reputation for producing newly qualified teachers schools want to employ. Our tutors have many years of experience as teachers themselves and our expert knowledge of education is enhanced by the international perspectives of staff, students and research collaborations.

A tradition of successful partnership: The School of Education has an excellent track record of developing fruitful collaborations with schools and supporting the development of teacher education across the region. As well as partnerships that support our University-led PGCE, we also work with a wide range of schools to offer the School Direct PGCE, giving students a choice of study routes and enabling schools to take a stronger lead in recruiting and growing their own teachers.

High quality teacher training: In its last inspection (2015), Ofsted rated our PGCE Secondary course as ‘Good’ with many ‘Outstanding’ features.

Find out more

If you would like to offer placements for 2017-18 PGCE students, or want to find out more about hosting placements and joining the University of Leicester PGCE Partnership, contact:

The Partnership Office
e: pgcepartnership@le.ac.uk
t: 0116 229 7504

The School of Education at the University of Leicester

Since 1946, we’ve been committed to supporting children and young people at every stage of their lives. We work closely with schools and institutions across Leicestershire and beyond, training and developing teachers throughout their career and undertaking ground-breaking research that drives forward change in policy and delivers innovation in the classroom.

• Our teacher education programmes are led by academic tutors with years of teaching experience themselves and supported by partnerships with more than 200 schools
• Practical courses and networking opportunities offered by our professional development team enhance teaching practice and encourage collaboration
• One in five of our research outputs is deemed ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’ and our academics are experts in their field with a shared passion for research that delivers real-world impact
• Our highly regarded postgraduate courses cover a range of topics that enable teachers and educationalists to take their learning to the next level, including educational leadership, international education and action research; we also have a large, thriving community of doctoral students.

For more information

PGCE Secondary Office,
School of Education, University of Leicester,
21 University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RF

t: 0116 252 3676
f: 0116 252 3653
e: secondary.pgce@le.ac.uk
w: www.le.ac.uk/pgce-partnership

© University of Leicester