

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

25<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Mr Halfon

### **The impact of Covid-19 on teacher training and Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)**

We are writing to highlight a pressing concern raised by each of our organisations in our separate submissions to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services.

Whilst a great deal of emphasis and debate during this pandemic has rightly been focussed on students' learning and whether it is safe to re-open schools to more children, we are also concerned about the disruption to teacher training and the impact on NQTs starting in September.

This years' cohort of postgraduate trainee teachers have missed what is probably the most crucial part of their preparation. For most, the summer term is when they teach the majority of their lessons and are able to embed the learning from pedagogical and subject studies into their practice. In doing so, they develop the pedagogical content knowledge that is essential to being a good subject teacher. Trainees in the science subjects are additionally impacted by being away from school. They are lacking crucial opportunities to hone the skills needed to lead practical activities safely.

When these trainees start their first teaching jobs, in what potentially will be a challenging year even for experienced teachers, they will need extra support and a more gradual introduction to their full teaching allocation.

Therefore, we are making the following recommendations:

- They should have access to high-quality subject-specific professional development and mentoring to support them with learning how to teach their subject in what is, in effect, their second teaching placement.
- There should be specific strategies designed to help them transition to a full NQT workload. Government should provide additional funding to enable schools to give their NQTs a reduced teaching load – somewhere between the maximum that would be expected of a trainee, and the normal NQT contact hours. Specifically, and to ensure that graduating trainees are not left without jobs, the funding should allow schools to over-recruit NQTs on a reduced timetable – especially in shortage subjects.
- Schools should consider how they could reduce NQTs' workload by timetabling them repeat lessons and allowing science teachers to focus on the science discipline in which they are most confident.

We also have concerns about next years' initial teacher training (ITT) provision – in particular, how trainees will be able to develop their teaching of practical work if social distancing and enhanced health and safety measures for laboratory and fieldwork are in

place. In addition, our ITT provider contacts are concerned that many schools will choose not to host trainee teachers next year.

It is imperative that Government acts quickly to put plans in place to support teacher training and NQTs. Without adequate re-assurances, we worry that the problems of teacher shortages in the subjects we collectively represent will be compounded. Good applicants may be put off because of uncertainties about the quality of training they will receive, and promising new teachers could leave because they are not properly supported.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Russell, Chief Executive, The Association for Science Education



Professor Paul Hardaker, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Physics



Julie Maxton, Executive Director, The Royal Society



Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive, Royal Society of Biology



Sarah Robertson, Director, Education & Professional Practice, Royal Society of Chemistry