



## Foundation Office

*For the Whole of Their Life*

### Submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Secretariat Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment GPO Box 9880, Canberra,  
ACT 2601  
18 July 2021

Dear Expert Panel,

The St Philip's Teaching School welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Review Expert Panel about how to improve our capacity as a sector to attract, train and retain high quality, effective teachers.

#### Introduction

The St Philip's Teaching School (SPTS) was launched in partnership with Alphacrucis College (AC) in 2018 in response to the long-held knowledge that graduate teachers are not classroom ready. Many teachers would acknowledge that there is something wrong with ITE. There is a frustration with the way they are trained and a realisation that they are not classroom ready at the completion of their degree. Many enter university with a love for children and a passion for teaching; they learn the theory of education, engage in two or three professional placements, and then find themselves in front of a class, becoming increasingly aware of what they don't know. When faced with the multi-faceted demands of teaching, such as how to conduct parent-teacher interviews, write reports, plan and oversee excursions, respond to complaints about bullying, the gap between theory and practice becomes evident. The reality is that we cannot effectively train teachers in a sterile lecture room. They must be embedded within an organic school

community.

57 High St | PO Box 87, Waratah NSW 2298 | Ph 02 4960 6600  
Fax 02 4960 6690 | [foundation@spcc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:foundation@spcc.nsw.edu.au) | [www.spcc.nsw.edu.au](http://www.spcc.nsw.edu.au)  
WARATAH PORT STEPHENS GOSFORD CESSNOCK DALE DYPS

1

The consensus was that the traditional teacher training model needed to be 'flipped' to provide more significant input from school communities to raise the next generation of teachers. In response to this belief an in-situ bachelor's degree within the classrooms of the St Philip's Christian College group of schools was launched. Both school and tertiary provider recognised that to improve the quality of teacher training; we need to involve exemplar principals, teachers and schools. An initial cohort of eight trainees has grown to 40 trainees enrolled across four different year levels in 2021. The Teaching School offers an alternate 'apprentice' and 'sponsorship' model of ITE where trainees are embedded in the life of the school for their entire educational journey and are paid a part-time Teacher Assistant wage from the outset of their degree.

Quality Initial Teacher Training Review Discussion Paper Part A, point 1, states the importance of producing quality teachers. We believe in the journey of the St Philip's Teaching School; we have found a uniquely better approach in which to achieve these outcomes which is proving to be very successful. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review on the basis of the experience of our staff, mentors and trainees.

## Reflections from the St Philip's Teaching School

### PART A - Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession

#### 1. How can we further encourage high performing and highly motivated school leavers to enter ITE and choose teaching as a career?

The SPTS offers a combination of a scholarship program, immediate employment and the ability to work for an employer of choice, attracting an increasing level of interest from high-calibre applicants exhibiting academic excellence, quality character traits and a passion for teaching. In 2021, close to 50 expressions of interest were received for ten places, which continues to increase, and goes against current numbers entering the teaching profession. Investing in the trainees demonstrates that we value them and supports the belief that quality training of teachers is critical to improving student outcomes. Trainees accept their position in the Teaching School with pride and duty, knowing that valuing the financial and



professional investment that this organisation is investing in them is made into their development as a teacher, and embrace the opportunity to learn the craft of teaching contribute to the school community.

The opportunity to be employed in an innovative school of excellence, mentored by an exemplar teacher, is attractive to those who want to train as teachers. The St Philip's Teaching School is attracting high calibre trainees who desire to train on the job. They are not seen as tertiary students considering whether the teaching profession is for them, but instead as dedicated Trainee Teachers who are committed to the profession from the outset.

*"The St Philip's Teaching School endeavours to provide quality education and experience to its trainee teachers. I was a student at St Philip's Christian College, Port Stephens when I decided to apply to the Teaching School*

*I have been in the program for 6 months and have already learnt so much, including classroom organisation, how to interact well with students and most importantly developing behaviour management strategies. The Teaching School offers weekly Insight Sessions that refine our teaching practice. We have learnt how to effectively use questioning, ICT resources, as well as exploring pedagogies such as EDI and how to teach gifted students. It has paired so well with the first subjects studied in our degree. We have been able to use our personal experiences and observations in the classroom to inform our study and vice versa.*

*I am so grateful to my placement school and the staff for being so ready to teach me and for giving us the opportunity to apply our knowledge in practice."*

*– First -Year Trainee, SPCC Cessnock*

### 3. How can we increase ITE completion rates so that quality ITE students graduate and pursue careers as quality teachers?

Candidates applying to the Teaching School go through an in-depth screening process before being offered a place. Trainees are selected based on a combination of ATAR or previous academic transcript and an interview with representative leaders from St Philip's Christian College and tertiary provider Alphacrucis (AC) to assess suitability to the profession.



Furthermore, the applicants must present an activity of their choice to a small group of Stage 2 students. They are asked to reflect on their practice and respond to feedback from the panel. The purpose is to observe the applicant's interactions with students, their ability to self-reflect and how they respond to feedback to improve practice. Several applicants have noted that this has been the highlight of the application process, thus confirming their desire to be a teacher. Due to the rigorous nature of the selection process, trainees who commence the course are generally convinced that the teaching profession is the path for them, which translates into low attrition rates.

From the first week of their degree, trainees are immersed in the classroom environment, experiencing the rhythm of the school year, exposure to life in a classroom with the support of the school community. The benefit of early experience in-situ is that trainees can quickly make an informed choice as to whether teaching is the right career for them. It is noted that a small number of trainees have made the decision to leave the course in the first months of their degree. Overall, we see a high level of commitment from trainees, resulting in a 100% retention rate in the third and fourth years. At this stage, the trainee is invested in their career choice, having been employed in the industry for three years. By their third year, the trainees identify themselves as being confident teachers who effectively contribute to the delivery of quality education, as do their mentors and colleagues.

*“What a pleasure it has been to have [trainee] as part of our team this term. A comment made by one of our other College staff members yesterday (who is not PE) mentioned she couldn't believe he was only a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student. I echo this sentiment. His inquisitive nature and mature approach to his teaching has been a pleasure to work with. I would have no hesitation to have [trainee] as a member of the PDHPE team next year.” – Mentor Teacher, SPCC Cessnock*

#### 4. What more can be done to address issues with workforce supply in some subject areas (particularly mathematics) and schools?

Offering employment at a school throughout the degree, and the prospect of future work, makes the study required a viable option for those considering a career change into teaching. The Teaching School supports recruiting specialised trainees with industry knowledge, such as Engineers training as Physics, Mathematics and iSTEM teachers, targeting future staffing



needs in the group of schools. At the SPTS, we ascertain where the employment needs lie from the principals, which becomes a factor in the advertising and selection process for the next intake. Trainees can be trained in these specific areas of need within the school setting and be ready for employment when they graduate. By having a teacher training program embedded in the industry, we can directly address the current teacher employment needs across the organisation and other schools in the region.

*“Throughout my training, St Philip's Teaching School has provided me with an educational experience that would not have been possible anywhere else in Australia at this time. I am genuinely grateful to have the opportunity to be employed at a school where I can develop as a teacher and exercise what I am learning in my degree in real-time. St Philip's Christian College provides more than just an employment opportunity. The College genuinely cares about its staff and students' well-being and invests resources into ensuring that they have everything they need to live and work well. St Philip's Teaching School's passion for developing confident, respectful, highly skilled and genuine teachers who are passionate about young people is unmatched. As a third-year Teaching School student, I value their commitment and investment in me as a future teacher of the College.” - Third-Year Trainee, SPCC Waratah*

## PART B – Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

6. What more can we do to ensure that ITE curriculum is evidence based and all future teachers are equipped to implement evidence-based teaching practices?
7. What more can ITE providers and employers do to ensure ITE students are getting the practical experience they need before they start their teaching careers?

The Teaching School model is a holistic experience for the trainees. A Teaching School trainee is immersed in school life from the beginning of their degree, providing insight into the rigour of teaching and the rhythms of the school year throughout their four years of study. Trainees are involved in parent-teacher interviews, cocurricular activities, staff meetings, excursions, carnivals, curriculum development and many other elements that make up a day in the life of a teacher.





One of the frequent comments from new graduate teachers who have come through a traditional method of teacher training is that the actual role of a teacher encompasses much more in reality than what is taught in the tertiary setting and experienced on professional placements. By contrast, the Teaching School trainees experience the role of the teacher in its fullness from the outset, and they learn to manage their classroom teaching load along with all other aspects of the life of a teacher.

Trainees also benefit from a breadth of experience across the St Philip's group and affiliated schools. Each year, the Trainee will move to a new sector of the organisation to expand on their skill development in a different setting. The St Philip's group consists of four K-12 mainstream schools in varying socio-economic areas, geographical locations, and facilities. It also offers alternate learning schools (St Philip's Christian College DALE) for students with social and emotional disorders and a school dedicated to young parents and their children (St Philip's Christian College DALE Young Parents). The trainees are employed at several schools throughout their degree, including the NESAs endorsed practicums in State and Independent schools. This results in well-trained and classroom-ready graduates who have accumulated up to 340 days of in-class experience through their training, equating to almost two years of full-time teacher employment.

Weekly 'Insight' sessions are a key distinctive of the Teaching School programme. Interactive workshops where key areas including pedagogy, theories of education, wellbeing and teacher formation are run by exemplar professionals from both within the St Philip's Christian Colleges, and other organisations. Topics are determined on the basis of current issues, trainee interest, linkage with degree course content and identified areas of need, building a full teacher toolkit.

The in-situ experience, paired with the deep knowledge of the theory elements of the degree studied through AC, makes for a uniquely better way of training teachers who are professionally and contextually ready for their careers.

*"The training school hub allows for great integration between the skills and content taught in lectures and in reading to the real-life classroom. It has been an incredible*



*journey thus far to see how concepts that may seem removed from the classroom in a reading come to life when watching other teachers in practice or using skills for myself.” – Fourth Year Trainee, Port Stephens*

*“At the Teaching School, what we experience in the lecture theatre we get to practice immediately in the classroom, it really helps us to understand the reason behind the theory we are learning and how to apply it.”*

*– Teaching School Trainee, DALE*

#### 8. How can Teaching Performance Assessment arrangements be strengthened to ensure graduate teachers are well-prepared for the classroom?

While the TPA is completed based upon their final practicum, SPTS trainees acknowledge that they benefit from drawing upon their experience over the four years of in-situ training, encapsulating their breadth of experience. Complementary to the assessment of their degree course work delivered by AC, the SPTS adopts a formative approach to assessment to guide and strengthen the practical elements of teacher development. An online learning management system and skill-based curriculum enables trainees to set and reflect on targets measured against the Graduate Teaching Standards, thus guiding their development to and ensuring that they are well-prepared for the classroom. Trainees are required to develop an evidence-based portfolio, further equipping them with the necessary skills in applying for Proficiency Teacher status with NESAs.

The ongoing assessment of the trainee development is guided by discussion with the Mentor teacher, school leaders and the Principal of the Teaching School. It is understood that this process is driven by the trainee, again preparing them for the self-guided learning required of a teacher. Semester reviews are completed in discussion with the Mentor teacher where key strengths and targets for future development are agreed upon. Weekly meetings between mentor and trainee provide the opportunity for reflection and feedback to guide the development of the trainee. Through this process, the trainee is encouraged to access research, observe colleagues and engage in professional learning opportunities in the school community.



*'[My trainee's] lessons are highly engaging and she is often checking for understanding before moving into the next step of her lesson, and I have observed her becoming more comfortable in being creative in her planning and teaching style. She is embracing the chaos that often comes within a classroom and using these as teachable moments for herself and the students. She is constantly looking for ways to improve her practice to benefit the students she is teaching.'*

*– Mentor Teacher, SPCC Cessnock*

9. How can leading teachers, principals and schools play a greater role in supporting the development of ITE students?

10. Can ITE providers play a stronger role in ongoing professional development and support of teachers?

The SPTS works in partnership with the tertiary provider to deliver uniquely better support for trainee teachers for the entire duration of their training. The unique role of the Mentor Teacher is critical to the success of the teaching school program. To date, over 70 Mentor Teachers have invested in the development of trainee teachers in our program. A skilled Mentor Teacher will inspire trainees, equip them with skills to refine their craft, challenge them to think deeply about what to teach and why and encourage them to embrace challenges in a nurturing and supportive environment. Teaching is a team sport, and the relationship between the Mentor, trainee and the school community is fundamental to effective ITE.

Each trainee of the St Philip's Teaching School is individually allocated a Mentor Teacher and their class. As well as daily collegiality, where the trainee acts as an apprentice, they have regular debriefing meetings, which allows them to address any aspects of school life that the trainee may find difficult and providing positive feedback on progress. In our experience, this relationship has been instrumental in the success of our trainees. By having well known and supported trainees, they flourish as individuals in their strengths as a teacher.

*"The St Philip's Teaching School provides us with a level of emotional, spiritual and educational support that you wouldn't find elsewhere. We are supported as much as possible in order for us to succeed."*

*– Teaching School Trainee, DALE*



This unique aspect of the Teaching School also has resulted in excellent support to our graduating teachers. Each of our trainee graduates has a network of established relationships across the schools. After they graduate and move into a teaching position within the organisation, this support is often continued. The Mentors, who have invested time in helping them develop, are eager to see them continue to grow and regularly check in with them in the following years.

A significant benefit to the St Philip's group of schools from the Mentor Program is that our Mentor Teachers have refined and improved their craft through guiding the trainees. Holding this position encourages the Mentor Teacher to reflect on why they do what they do and if there is a better way. This process helps them enhance their teaching practice, ensuring that they engage in best practice, thus improving student experience and outcomes. The apprenticeship model of teacher training is raising the quality of teaching across the organisation.

*'It is my pleasure to be able to observe and learn from [my trainee] and to watch him grow and develop his teaching skill and confidence. The way he interacts with the students with so much patience and care plus his and perception of students needs and areas of concern is unlike I have seen in any other practicum student I have worked with.'*

*– Mentor Teacher, SPCC Newcastle*

*"It is these wonderful teaching moments that give Teaching School Trainees inspiration to keep diving deeper into thinking about; 'What was in my lesson that gained my students attention, captured their hearts and made them want to learn and grow?' When we ask ourself these reflective questions regularly we become reflective practitioners and have a desire to always prepare and present lessons that have impact and grow a love of learning in our students' hearts."*

*– Mentor Teacher, SPCC Cessnock*





The Partnership between industry and tertiary utilise the strengths of both sectors. The tertiary partner provides the trainees with the theoretical knowledge which is imperative to the foundation and understanding of the teaching profession. Furthermore, it provides them with the tools of research and exploration, skills in teaching technique and in understanding compliance, and pedagogy.

For this model to be successful we cannot have one without the other, both sectors are required to produce quality trained, passionate teachers, who are confident and ready to enter the classroom. The industry partner provides real-life field experience, support from teachers who are in the profession, an opportunity to outwork the learnt theory in immediate application in a classroom setting. This combination of sponsored tuition, immediate employment and a future career pathway with an employer of choice drives up the quality of candidates at the point of selection. The potential of this teaching model has recently been recognised by the NSW State Government and was named a pilot project with \$2.9 million of funding allocated to advance its development in partnership with tertiary provider Alphacrucis College.

*“The St Philip's Teaching School (SPTS) has an outstanding commitment and personal investment into the training of pre-service teachers. The training model has resulted in my peers and I being confident that we are industry-ready. We have been supported as staff members of the school communities rather than a 'number' at a university. As a result of this support, the transition I made into having my own class this year was an incredibly positive experience.*

*I am grateful for the holistic approach to mentoring that St Philip's Christian College has provided me with during my years at the Teaching School. I have been provided with opportunities to develop as a teacher in all areas through partnership with my mentor, including being involved in teaching, programming, carnivals, team meetings, assemblies and taking on responsibilities within our team to work with other colleagues.*

*The SPTS has an incredible commitment to bringing its pre-service teachers into their school communities. While we formally have one mentor per year, my peers and I often reflect that*



*we feel as though we have many, because of the way our teams and sub-schools have supported us and invested in our training. They have offered advice and support, with care and authenticity, at every stage of my learning journey enabling me to embrace challenges to improve. The staff have shown genuine interest in my progress and success and have consistently helped me rise to challenges, meet goals in my profession, and develop my teacher skills and presence.”*

*– Fourth-Year Trainee, SPCC Waratah*

## Conclusion

The current review of ITE is critical to ensuring the quality of future education in Australia. As stated earlier, we cannot effectively train teachers in a sterile lecture room, but rather ITE must be embedded within an organic school community. The uniquely better approach to teacher training offered by the St Philip’s Teaching School is based on the belief that quality teaching has a lifelong influence on student outcomes. The evidence shows that this alternate model of ITE is attracting and training high quality candidates who have an understanding of the role. We welcome the Expert Panel to visit the St Philip’s Teaching School and would be happy to elaborate further on any of the points outlined above.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this review.

Kind regards



**Samantha Van de Mortel**  
**Principal St Philip’s Teaching School**

**M:** [REDACTED]

**E:** [REDACTED]