



Using CPSQ to proactively support school mentors and trainee teachers



Improving outcomes for trainee teachers

Stockton SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) provides a postgraduate teacher training route which includes placements in primary and secondary schools, leading to qualified teacher status (QTS). They partner with a university which provides the academic Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification. Crucial to the success of this route are in-school mentors, qualified teachers who provide the link between formal training and practical teaching. School mentors undertake activities such as lesson observations, provide ongoing daily support and advice, evaluate trainees' progress across the training year and introduce them to the wider school community.



To help improve the quality of school mentors' support, Stockton SCITT now asks trainees to take the Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) before their training year begins. CPSQ results map trainees' personal styles onto professional competencies and are used by Stockton SCITT as the basis for their 'Trainee Initial Needs Plan,' which is prepared for every individual trainee.

'We first heard about CPSQ at a NASBTT meeting (the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers),' says Stockton SCITT ITT Partnership Manager Kirsten Webber. 'We felt that CPSQ could help our school mentors better target their approach to their individual trainee's

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Contact us

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing
The Triangle Building
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 8EA
United Kingdom

admissionstesting@
cambridgeassessment.org.uk

About CPSQ

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) is an online assessment that helps you identify trainees' and teachers' 'personal styles' – their values and behaviours, how they approach tasks and how they interact with others. The insights gained can be used to enhance and tailor teacher training courses, tackle retention issues, encourage reflection and support mentoring.

CPSQ provides feedback on an individual's personal styles matched against seven professional competencies:

- Caring and compassion
- Person-centred communication
- Working well with others
- Self-management
- Professional practice
- Coping with demands
- Engagement with learning

About Stockton SCITT

Stockton SCITT has provided high-quality ITT training for both primary and secondary school teachers for over 18 years. Stockton SCITT has established a partnership of schools that works closely together to deliver high-quality, personalised training and has a proven track record for successfully developing and training future teachers.

support needs and would show our trainees that we wanted to understand them as individuals. More personalised support could also help improve trainee retention, which is always a priority for organisations such as ours.'

The Trainee Initial Needs Plan uses trainees' CPSQ data to identify issues which may impact their future performance, together with advice on how such issues could be addressed. 'We train our school mentors on how to use this type of behavioural feedback in order to intervene more swiftly when a trainee needs help, both through discussion and by encouraging greater self-awareness,' explains Kirsten. 'We also use CPSQ information to inform best practice and help reduce our school mentors' workload. For example, when CPSQ reports highlight recurring behavioural themes we can create a bank of best practice and guidance resources around these specific personal styles which school mentors can draw on.'

“ It's an ideal basis for initial discussions around the potential challenges a trainee might face. ”

Emma Anderson, Year 4 Primary Class Teacher and School Mentor, Whinstone Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees

For me, the CPSQ-based Trainee Initial Needs Plan is a very useful and accurate support tool. It's an ideal basis for initial discussions around the potential challenges a trainee might face, and also to identify areas where they have the potential to do well. This means I can start the mentoring process immediately, which is very useful given that our time with each trainee is limited.

Regarding CPSQ competency areas used in the Plan, I consider the most relevant are those behaviours linked to 'Professional practice' and 'Self-management'. A teacher must be able to manage their workload or they risk either burning out (and leaving the profession) or doing too little, both of which affect students. 'Coping with demands' is another important area, as without the right coping skills you are at greater risk of dropping out of teaching altogether.

Every trainee is different, and not everyone can verbalise their needs, so it's very helpful to have a tool which can identify areas a trainee should work on. For example, older trainees, from different career backgrounds or with families, may need to improve their time management skills. Younger trainees, with less workplace experience, may need to work on their interpersonal skills, especially with colleagues. Other trainees may also have more specific learning needs, so I can use the Plan to make sure my support is appropriate to the trainee's needs.

Without the CPSQ-based Plan, issues of concern may not emerge until the trainee is well into their placement, mainly because they are so closely supervised during the early stages. If you and your trainee are aware of potential issues (and strengths) from the beginning then you can immediately address them and go forward, which is one of the key reasons why I find the CPSQ-based Plan so very useful.

Natalie Dove, Secondary English Teacher and School Mentor, Northfield School and Sports College, Stockton-on-Tees

My role as a school mentor very much depends on what the trainee needs. Some require a lot of support while others are very independent from the start, but the CPSQ-based Trainee Initial Needs Plan gives me an immediate overview of the kind of person I'll be working with. The personal styles descriptions it provides have proved very accurate and allow me to identify potential issues immediately, in turn avoiding potentially difficult conversations later in the placement when the impact of such issues (if unaddressed) starts to become apparent.

Regarding the competencies in the CPSQ-based Plan, I'm most interested in 'Caring and compassion', 'Coping with demands' and 'Professional practice' – areas where I would expect a trainee to score highly. For 'Caring and compassion' for example, I expect trainees to actively want to work with young people, and to manage and nurture students from different backgrounds. 'Coping with demands' is obviously essential, as a teacher's workload can be much bigger than expected, and is one reason why trainees drop out. 'Professional practice' is equally important – especially the ability to follow rules, procedures and protocols, and to be aware of safeguarding, which is a huge issue for the profession as a whole. Many trainees, not long out of education themselves, need to know and respect professional boundaries now they are a teacher and not a student.

After exploring issues of concern highlighted in the CPSQ-based Plan – such as 'can occasionally show frustration' – I can then follow up by observing a trainee's behaviour, to see how they deal with a defiant student in a lesson, for example. Allowing the trainee to read the CPSQ report also encourages self-awareness and is a chance to reflect on different aspects of the profession.

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