



UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Dear School Partners,

15.05.20

Firstly, I want to say thank you for your support and help over the course of the 2019/21 school year. We have successfully placed a huge number of students with you, both postgraduate and BEd, these students have been overwhelmingly positive regarding the school experience they received and the student representatives wish me to pass on their gratitude to you and your staff. I had planned a series of visits to partner schools this term to show my appreciation of the work you do for us... these will have to wait!

Sadly, the summer term placements have been disrupted by the Covid19 situation. Our Y3 students managed to complete their assessments for QTS prior to schools closing. The PGCE students were not so lucky, being two weeks into their final placements. However, I am very proud to say Schools, University staff and Students have been amazing and have pulled together in order to manage the needs of the children in our collective care. Many PGCE students offered to remain in schools to help manage Key worker and vulnerable children. In the event students could not physically be in schools, PGCE students have offered help with online learning. The majority of schools reengaged with our PGCE students and some incredible work is being done. Students are producing online resources, working directly with children and are supporting parents and carers with home schooling. A lot of this work will be showcased on a new website and will be available for schools to use as appropriate (I will post the link when I have it). Our new ePad recording system, although having a number of technical issues we are working on, has proved to be invaluable as we have been able to continue our placements virtually.

We are now thinking of the future and how the Institute of education can continue to support children and schools and develop high quality learning opportunities for our Students. Working with our School Strategic Partner Group, it is clear schools will have some reservations regarding offering places to students next year – none of us can be sure of the landscape we will find ourselves in.

However, it is imperative that we continue to train motivated, exciting and engaging young teachers.

When considering making offers for next year can I ask you to consider the following:

- Given the issues schools are likely to face regarding ill / self-isolating teachers and TAs, having students will provide extra staff resources.
- Children will need significant help - particularly vulnerable / SEND children. Students who can work with these children in small groups / 1-1 might be helpful in ensuring these children make good progress.
- Teaching will be markedly different – schools might well feel they don't have the capacity to mentor students effectively towards QTS as things are not 'normal'. I would argue that there is not going to be a 'normal' and engaging students in a school's unique situation is

going to be beneficial for both the school and the student. **The university will take the lead and will be responsible for ensuring student experiences are captured and progress to QTS is assessed.**

- Teaching is likely to involve an element of online / virtual work for the foreseeable future. Our staff, students and mentors are developing an understanding of effective practice having worked with a large number of schools this term. We will be able to share this understanding next year.
- Partner schools will be able to access CPD opportunities free of charge. We are developing a mentoring program allowing teachers to develop coaching and mentoring skills. This will be a phased programme, allowing 3 levels of development culminating in an accredited masters level award for teachers who would like to progress academically.
- As an Institute, we would like to support local schools with the challenges being faced. When schools are able to physically reconvene we would like to offer help delivering enrichment activities for vulnerable children. The purpose being to help these children to close the gap with their peers. Such sessions might be delivered after school or on Saturdays... we will refine the details when we have an idea of how things are unfolding.

To conclude, thank you for all your work and effort. I am very proud to be part of the teaching profession and am staggered by the professionalism and inventiveness of teachers. As a profession we need to continue to look to the future and to train inspiring teachers to work with our children. I understand how difficult it is to plan in the current climate, however, I am sure we can continue to work together to train teachers AND help schools through the current challenges. If you haven't done so – please respond to ITE placements with an indication of the places you might offer next year. **This is not a formal agreement and you can always change your mind at a later date.**

Thank you for your support and enjoy half term when you get to it!

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