



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

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NASBTT sets out six-point plan to bridge SEND 'practice gap' in teacher training

The National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) has outlined a six-point plan to better prepare new teachers for increasingly complex SEND needs in mainstream classrooms.

[Bridging the SEND practice gap: NASBTT report on mainstream ITT and SEND](#) was published following a comprehensive year-long review led by Margaret Mulholland, SEND and Inclusion Specialist at ASCL, which included a series of in-depth focus groups with ITT providers.

The report calls for a fundamental shift from measuring how much SEND content trainee teachers receive to developing their capability and confidence to make informed professional decisions in diverse classrooms.

It argues that the response should not be to add more SEND hours to nine-month ITT programmes. Instead, the way teachers are prepared to work with pupils who learn and present in different and sometimes unpredictable ways needs to be redesigned – including developing their confidence to manage uncertainty and adapt their teaching thoughtfully.

To achieve this, NASBTT has identified six priorities for change:

1. **Co-create a revised, permeated national content map for SEND across the ITTECF.** NASBTT proposes disseminating the findings from its cross-sector work with its SEND Co-Creation Group to support a sector-wide approach to developing the foundational professional learning trainee teachers need.
2. **Strengthen school-based SEND expertise and mentoring capacity.** Government SEND training investment should provide specific support for mentors of ITT trainees, including joint training for ITT tutors and school mentors, resources for observing and feeding back on adaptive teaching, structured roles for SENCOs and teaching leads, and protected mentoring time.
3. **Value, measure and monitor trainee self-efficacy in relation to SEND.** NASBTT asks the Department for Education (DfE) to move beyond assessing inclusion through SEND curriculum inputs and develop a measure which tracks trainees' confidence and competence through ITT and into their early career years.
4. **Align the 2027 ITTECF review with evidence of what works in SEND preparation.** The review should distinguish between foundational learning during ITT and what develops later, reflect realistic school-based capacity and shift quality assurance towards demonstrated competence in classrooms.
5. **Support collaborative resource development that underpins teacher decision making.** NASBTT proposes a national repository of high-quality SEND resources for ITT, including case studies, video exemplars, specialist placement protocols, assessment frameworks and research digests linked to practical tools.

6. **Invest in longitudinal research.** Government and sector partners should follow trainees into their early teaching careers to understand which ITT approaches best develop confident inclusive practice, how self-efficacy changes over time and the influence of inclusive school cultures.

Emma Hollis, CEO of NASBTT, said: “Initial teacher training carries more of the education system’s hopes for SEND reform than at any previous point. Providers have made significant progress, but we now need to move the conversation beyond how much SEND training trainees receive and focus much more closely on what they are able and confident to do as a result.

“Simply adding more content to already crowded programmes will not bridge the practice gap. We need to establish the core knowledge, skills and professional dispositions every inclusive teacher should develop, and then ensure these are embedded throughout their training and reinforced through high-quality school-based experiences.

“Our six recommendations provide a practical route towards that. This is about moving from coverage to capability – developing teachers who can understand the children in front of them, recognise barriers to learning, reflect critically and make informed decisions in complex classroom contexts.”

The organisation has also set out a clear ambition for what teacher preparation should look like by 2030.

It wants every trainee to finish ITT feeling ready to teach pupils who face barriers to learning; SEND and inclusion to be so embedded that an “inclusive lens” becomes the default; placements routinely to model and mentor inclusive pedagogy and adaptive teaching; teacher self-efficacy to increase during the early career years; and assessment to focus on professional decision-making and problem-solving rather than checklists.

Emma added: “Our goal is a system in which inclusion is central to what it means to be a teacher. The pupils who find learning hardest should feel that school has been designed with them in mind – and every new teacher should have the learning experiences, confidence and professional agency to help make that possible.”

Further core NASBTT resources: [SEND in ITT](#).

-ENDS-

The National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) is a registered charity committed to promoting high-quality schools-led programmes of training, education and professional development of teachers.

NASBTT is the voice of schools-led initial teacher training and represents our Members’ interests, ensuring that sector views are shared and help to inform future policy decisions. Our representation and advocacy work is informed by consultation with our Members and key priorities for the sector.

Our Members include School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers (SCITTs), HEIs, Teaching School Hubs and organisations engaged in the education and professional development of teachers.

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