Teacher success service: comms testing report

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Created: April 2025

Department for Education

Limitations

Testing limitations

- At this point in the cycle (March/April), most training is already well under way. **This will likely have an impact on engagement** if the need for this information is up front, in which case, we've missed the boat.
- We're mainly signposting to existing content provided externally – **we will not be able to measure how useful the content is** or what issues they're having that led them to click on support links.

Mitigations

- We'll include a feedback link at the bottom of every email to give users the opportunity to tell us more.

Overall testing performance

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Campaign	Average open rate	Average click through rate
Trainee support	54.3%	5.6%
Teaching Vacancies' new teachers campaign	49.1%	7.4%
Get Into Teaching campaign	63.35%	6.08%
Government standard	36.6%	2.9%

- We **expected engagement with our test comms to be low** because of the time of year we sent them, so this is encouraging to see that users are still engaging.
- This leads us to the hypothesis that **engagement will be even higher if we send comms mapped at the time of year we think the need is greatest.**

Test 1: signposting to support and lesson planning

Department for Education

Test 1 draft

Multivariate

Email version 1 (GOV.UK)

Hi *|FNAME|*,

You're halfway through your training and from your first day in the classroom to now, you've grown your skills and confidence.

Every fantastic teacher was once in your shoes.

As your training progresses and you take on more responsibility, you might be looking for some support.

Get support
If you need to talk to someone outside your school or course, you can talk to the Education Support charity who offer help to trainees and teachers.

Lesson planning resources
If you need additional support with planning lessons, you can try Oak National Academy's free teaching resources.

"You may feel overwhelmed, but it will get easier. Each lesson you teach builds in you teaching skill, so what might take you hours now will take you minutes in future. Keep going!"
Secondary English teacher trainee from 2023/24

Thank you for helping to shape the next generation,
Teacher Services team
The Department for Education

Take 5 minutes and give your feedback on what support you need as a trainee teacher.

Email version 2 (with image)

You're almost there, << Test First Name >>!

You're halfway through your training and from your first day in the classroom to now, you've grown your skills and confidence.

Every fantastic teacher was once in your shoes!

As your training progresses and you take on more responsibility, you might be looking for some support.

Get support
If you need to talk to someone outside your school or course, you can talk to the Education Support charity who offer help to trainees and teachers.

[Talk to someone]

Lesson planning resources
If you need additional support with planning lessons, you can try Oak National Academy's free teaching resources.

[Find lesson planning resources]

"You may feel overwhelmed, but it will get easier. Each lesson you teach builds in you teaching skill, so what might take you hours now will take you minutes in future. Keep going!"
Secondary English teacher trainee from 2023/24

Thank you for helping to shape the next generation,
The Department for Education

Take 5 minutes to give your feedback on what support you need as a trainee

Link to Lucidboard with draft content and survey

Test 1 variants

Variant 1: non-teaching branded, lesson planning then get support

Variant 2: non-teaching branded, get support then lesson planning

Variant 3: teaching branded, lesson planning then get support

Variant 4: teaching branded, get support then lesson planning

Testing **use of teaching branding** vs more GDS style, and also testing **different ordering of content** to mitigate for users just clicking on the first link rather than the link they're most interested in.

Test 1 – September vs January starts

- Most trainees **started in September (30,020)** with a small proportion starting in January (322).
- Our hypothesis was that we'd get a **higher level of engagement from January start trainees** due to it being earlier on in their training and more likely to be relevant to them.
- We know **drop out is more likely to happen earlier on in the cycle** and the further along in the year they are, the less likely they'll need support with things like lesson planning because they'll have had more practise.
- However, the **September start cohort is much larger** which we need to bear in mind when we compare results.

Test 1 – September vs January starts

Variant	Sends	Open rate	Click rate	Unsubscribes	Clicks on lesson planning	Clicks on Education support
September starts	30,020	57.2%	4.5%	148	3.9%	0.8%
January starts	322	54.3%	8.1%	0	7.2%	2.5%

- While open rate was actually lower for January starts, **click through rate and engagement with content was higher.**
- This supports our hypothesis that **trainees earlier on in their placements will benefit more from access to teaching resources and support**.

Test 1 – teaching branding

- We tested sending users an email with **GDS styling** (plain email with a GOV.UK banner) and **teaching brand styling** (using images and colours in line with Get Into Teaching).
- Our hypothesis was that **engagement would be higher with the teaching brand styled email**.

Test 1 – teaching branding

September starts

Variant	Sends	Open rate	Click rate	Unsubscribes
GDS style	15,010	58%	4.1%	66
Teaching brand style	15,010	56.5%	5%	82

January starts

Variant	Sends	Open rate	Click rate	Unsubscribes
GDS style	162	55%	8%	0
Teaching brand style	160	53.8%	8.15%	0

Teaching branding vs GDS style
- The GDS style email had a slightly higher open rate but given we only changed the content of the email itself and nothing about the subject line or sender, there's no discernible reason for a difference between open rates.
- The teaching brand style email had a **slightly higher click through rate**.

Test 1 – teaching branding

- Using the teaching branding **didn't have a significant impact on engagement** compared to using the GDS styling.
- Users may still have preferred the teaching branding (something we could explore in user research) but this did not affect how they engaged with the email.
- There may be other reasons we choose to continue with the teaching branding (consistency with comms from Get Into Teaching, a friendlier style and tone to support users) but this will likely not increase click through rates.

Unknowns
- 2 variants of the teaching branded email had very different open rates for the January cohort – 45% and then 62.5%. There is no discernible reason for this as the open rate should be largely the same due to us not changing the subject line or sender.
- However, this audience is really small (only 80 users received each variant) so it's not a large sample to draw any major conclusions from.

Test 1 – content

- We included links to **lesson planning resources from Oak National Academy** and for users to **talk to someone from the Education Support charity** if they needed support.
- We sent half our audience a version of the email with the **lesson planning link first** and the other half a version with the **education support link first** – this was to mitigate for users who may just be drawn to the first link they see.
- Our hypothesis was that **trainees want practical resources** to help them plan lessons and that **trainees need extra support** during their training and will engage with content from DfE offering it.

Test 1 – content

September starts

Link	Click rate
Lesson planning	3.9%
Education support	0.8%

January starts

Variant	Click rate
Lesson planning	7.2%
Education support	2.5%

- For both cohorts, **engagement with lesson planning resources was higher**.

Limitations
- Because we were linking to external resources, we **can't track what users went on to do or how they engaged with the resources**. This means we can't see how effective this content was and if they found it useful, only **if there was an appetite for it.**

Test 1 – SCITT vs HEI engagement

- Our user research has indicated that SCITT trainees often have more support than HEI trainees, leading us to the hypothesis that **HEI trainees will be more engaged with supportive content than SCITT trainees.**

Test 1 – SCITT vs HEI engagement

Email opens (September starts)

Provider type	Open rate
SCITT	55.8%
HEI	57.8%

Email opens (January starts)

Provider type	Open rate
SCITT	64.3%
HEI	52.3%

Email clicks (September starts)

Provider type	Open rate	
	Lesson planning	Education support
SCITT	4.6%	1%
HEI	3.4%	0.72%

Email clicks (January starts)

Provider type	Open rate	
	Lesson planning	Education support
SCITT	8.9%	1.8%
HEI	6.8%	2.6%

Test 1 – SCITT vs HEI engagement

- Open rate was **slightly higher for HEI trainees** in the September cohort but **lower in the January cohort**.
- More **SCITT trainees clicked on both lesson planning and support links** in the September cohort.
- More **SCITT trainees** clicked on lesson planning links in the January cohort but more **HEI trainees clicked on support links**.

Test 1 – engagement by phase

Start date	Open rate		Lesson planning clicks		Education support clicks	
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*
September	66.3%	49.1%	2.8%	4.9%	0.52%	1.1%
January	48.5%	64.2%	5.9%	9.2%	1.49%	4.17%

- Teaching Vacancies' new teachers campaign found the **primary trainee audience consistently more engaged with email comms than secondary** – which our open rates for September starts supports, but not the rest of the data.

Test 1 – engagement by subject

- Previous research suggested that trainees teaching niche subjects might have less support within their training environment, leading us to the hypothesis that **trainees in niche subjects will be more engaged with support comms, especially around lesson planning resources.**
- Engagement by subject can be **hard to compare** given some subjects have very few trainees (1 trainee in 2024/25 for classical Greek studies) compared to more popular subjects (2,445 trainees in 2024/25 for English studies).

Test 1 – engagement by subject (September starts)

Subject	Trainees	Open rate	Lesson planning clicks	Education Support clicks
Media	23	69.6%	8.7%	0%
Health and social	31	41.9%	0%	3.23%
IT	57	42.1%	5.26%	0%
English	1,306	53.6%	3.24%	0.98%
Mathematics	1,330	55.9%	5.38%	0.92%
Primary	7,927	57.1%	2.78%	0.52%

Open rate
- Median open rate was 56.6%.

Click through rates
- Median click through rate on lesson planning was 4.97%
- Median click through rate on education support was 0.92%.

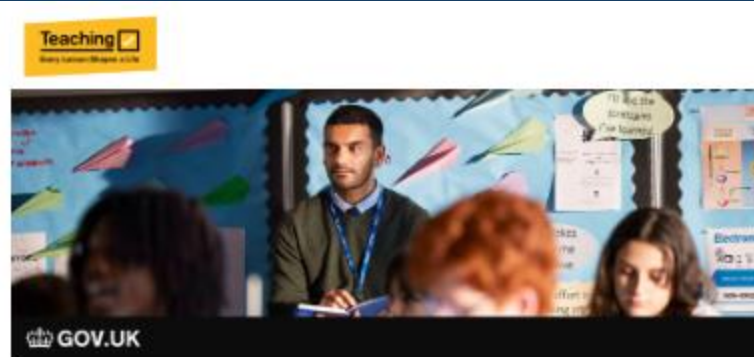This shows that actually **subjects with a larger cohort generally had higher engagement with our comms**.

Test 2: support as an ECT

Test 2 draft
Multivariate

Test 2 – support as an ECT

- We wanted to test the hypotheses that:
  - Trainees will **engage with comms about what to expect as an ECT** from DfE.
  - There is value in **reassuring trainees that they'll continue to receive support** once they pass their training.
  - Trainees are **unsure what being an ECT looks like** and will engage with content about it.

Test 2 – audience trends

Cohort	Open rate	Clicks
HEI	53%	3.6%
SCITT	51%	5.2%
Primary	53%	3.4%
Secondary	52%	5%
Provider led postgrad	52%	4.7%
Provider led undergrad	56%	1.6%
HPITT	49%	3.4%
School Direct	50%	6%
PG teaching apprenticeship	48%	5.7%
Media	70%	13%
Health and social	35%	3.2%
IT	47%	3.5%
English	50%	3.8%
Mathematics	50%	5.8%
Primary	53%	3.4%

Test 2 – engagement with support as an ECT page

- Because our second email sent users to a page on Get Into Teaching, we can track how they engaged with that content.

Engagement
- Email led to 1,519 sessions.
- Bounce rate of 23%.
- Average engagement time per session was 1m 10s.
- Trainees also viewed information on:
  - Scholarship and bursaries (82 views)
  - Teacher pay (63 views)
  - Teacher training advisers (37 views)
  - Routes into teaching wizard (27 views)
  - Teacher degree apprenticeships (23 views)
  - Get Into Teaching national online event (22 views)

Conclusions

- We wanted to test the overall hypothesis that **trainees need extra support during their training and will engage with content from DfE offering it**.
- We **proved this hypothesis to be true**.