



South Farnham Educational Trust

●●●●● The Continual Pursuit of Excellence



Fitness to Teach

Policy Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures used during registration onto a **tuition fee programme** and advises candidates on an employment-based programme (the employing school will conduct a 'fitness to teach' check as part of their pre-employment checks). The policy also considers any changes of circumstance during the period of training.

The following documents and legislation should be read in conjunction with this policy (links can be found in the final section of this policy):

- Able to Teach: Guidance for Providers of Initial Teacher Training on Disability Discrimination and Fitness to Teach. Teacher Training Agency (2007)
- Education Act (2002)
- ITT criteria supporting advice – updated 1st September 2022
- Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach and of Entrants to Initial Teacher Training. Circular No: 4/99 Department of Education and Employment (DfEE)

Application of this Policy

This policy applies to all South Farnham SCITT (SF SCITT) Initial Teacher Training Programmes.

Completion of a Health Declaration Form

All applicants for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) must complete an assessment to ensure that they meet the Secretary of State's requirements for physical and mental Fitness to Teach. SF SCITT uses a third party, 'Optima Health' (OH). SF SCITT will ask all tuition fee candidates to complete TP Health's online questionnaire before Induction. All trainees on employment based routes will have this check completed by their employer.

Teachers, and those training to become teachers, need a high standard of physical and mental fitness to enter the teaching profession. Teaching is a demanding career and teachers have a duty of care towards the pupils in their charge. The health, education, safety and welfare of pupils, is taken into account when your Fitness to Teach is assessed.

In deciding whether a candidate is fit to teach, SF SCITT's occupational health adviser (OHA) at TP Health will consider whether candidates:

- have the physical and mental health and well-being necessary to deal with specific types of teaching and associated duties (adjusted, as appropriate) they are engaged in
- are able to communicate effectively with children, parents and colleagues
- possess sound judgement and insight
- remain alert at all times
- can respond to pupils' needs rapidly and effectively
- are able to manage classes
- do not constitute any risk to the health, safety or well-being of children in their care
- can, wherever necessary and appropriate, be enabled by reasonable adjustment to meet these criteria

'Teaching' is legally defined as:

- planning and preparing lessons and courses for children
- delivering lessons to children
- assessing the development, progress and attainment of children, and
- reporting on the development, progress and attainment of children

Because ITT is substantially school-based, candidates must meet the same fitness requirements as qualified teachers, and SF SCITT will look at the evidence available on that basis. They should not, however, be influenced by any assumptions about a candidate's job prospects, once qualified, as this may amount to direct

discrimination. SF SCITT must also make a judgement (as required by C1.3 of the Secretary of State's 'Initial Teacher Training Criteria', December 2021) about whether a candidate has the intellectual and academic potential to meet the QTS standards.

Once the Optima Health occupational health adviser (OHA) has made their assessment, they will categorise candidates into one of three groups and will inform the candidate and SF SCITT:

- a) Fit to teach: those who are in good health and free from conditions that might be likely to interfere with efficiency in teaching
- b) Fit to teach with reasonable adjustments: those who are in good health but who have conditions which are likely to interfere to some extent with their efficiency in teaching either all subjects, or certain specified subjects. However, these conditions are not serious enough to make the candidate unfit for the teaching profession. This includes some disabled people who need reasonable adjustments to enable them to provide effective and efficient teaching
- c) Unfit to teach: those whose condition makes them unfit for the teaching profession. Candidates will not normally be included in this category unless they have a psychiatric condition or physical impairment likely to interfere seriously with regular and efficient teaching of either general subjects, or the subject they intend to specialise in (eg. PE or science subjects), or if they have a condition that may carry a risk to the safety or welfare of the pupils

Candidates must complete the declaration of health form prior to commencement of programme. SF SCITT has a responsibility to partnership schools and the pupils attending those schools that all trainees on placement are fit to train to teach and where appropriate, have put in place reasonable adjustments to manage the impact of any disability, medical condition, or mental health issue on their teaching.

Candidates must meet all conditions of entry to be fully registered on their course. If a candidate is not fully registered they will not be eligible to receive any funding – including all loans and grants from Student Finance England or other relevant funding body. If a candidate fails to satisfy this condition, they could be withdrawn from the programme after four weeks of training.

Employing schools will be contacted to confirm this check has been completed and the outcomes of that report.

Confidentiality

Candidates answers are confidential and their completed online health declaration forms are assessed by Optima Health. SF SCITT will receive a 'Medical Certificate of Fitness to Work' from them and this will be held for the duration of the programme and for seven years following completion of the course. SF SCITT will not share copies of certificates.

Information received by SF SCITT will not be shared without agreement. Under the General Data Protection Regulation (May, 2018) and current legislation, information about impairments is considered 'sensitive information', which means that it cannot be passed onto anyone else without explicit and informed consent. Candidates therefore have the right to ask that such information be treated as confidential. However, if SF SCITT feel that the fulfilment of professional duties and achievement of QTS would in any way be compromised SF SCITT reserve the right to decline school placement unless disclosure is agreed. It should be noted that some impairments must be disclosed to the school and that a candidate's ability to succeed at a placement may be compromised if they are unwilling to disclose and accept the reasonable adjustments offered.

Optima Health will pass on information given 'in confidence' only if there is a significant identified risk to the

candidate concerned, or to pupils or others.

Non-disclosure of a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) individuals have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own and other people's health and safety at work. In addition, schools, academies and colleges have a statutory responsibility for 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people' (Education Act, 2002). If a candidate has a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue which has a bearing on their occupational health, they are required to disclose these on the health declaration questionnaire. If a candidate declines to disclose a condition which affects their Fitness to Teach, or give false information then it may affect their ability to continue with their studies.

On a more practical level it also prevents candidates from accessing any support that they would be legally entitled to during their training under the Equality Act (2010). According to this legislation, the SCITT and partnership schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to support any candidate disclosing a disability, long term medical condition, or mental health issue.

Disclosure of a disability, long-term medical condition or mental health

If a candidate has a disability, medical condition, or mental health issue then it's likely that the Optima Health OHA will request that they provide appropriate medical evidence of the relevant condition from their GP or Consultant and refer the candidate for a further assessment before a final decision is made. This is an opportunity to identify support needs or reasonable adjustments, which may be required.

If any need for support or reasonable adjustment is identified as part of the Occupational Health assessment, **tuition fee candidates can contact the Dyslexia & Disability Support service** to discuss how this could be implemented during the course. The support candidates can access will depend upon the individual circumstances. Candidates may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs).

Examples of the type of support available are as follows:

- help with travel costs if a candidate is unable to use public transport
- assistive technology software
- specialist ergonomic equipment
- sessions with one-to-one study skills support tutors or specialist mentors

Trainees on **Employment based routes** (School direct salaried and Apprentices) are not eligible for DSA assistance, this is for students who are funded through student finance. Trainees on these routes are entitled to apply for **Access to Work**. This is a government scheme that offers funded support such as:

- assistive technology
- coaching or mentoring
- specialist equipment

Reasonable adjustments

Where Optima Health reports 'Fit to teach with reasonable adjustments' the Cohort Lead will meet with the trainee to complete a reasonable adjustments report. Together strategies the trainee already uses and other ways to support the trainee will be discussed, recorded and agreed adjustments confirmed in writing (please see the reasonable adjustments policy for further information).

Change in health circumstances during the period of study

If there is a change in health after a candidate has been passed fit to train to teach with or without adaptations (e.g. diagnosed with a long-term serious medical condition), the SCITT will contact TP Health and advise them

of a change in circumstance (a trainee can contact them at any time to advise of a change), they will send out a new declaration of health form for the candidate to complete. Further reports may be required from a GP or Consultant and the candidate may be referred for an Occupational Health assessment, which will enable SF SCITT to advise and support, based upon the new circumstances.

Additional information

- **Able to Teach: Guidance for Providers of Initial Teacher Training on Disability Discrimination and Fitness to Teach. Teacher Training Agency (2007)**

<https://nadp-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Able-to-Teach.pdf>

- **Education Act (2002)**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents>

- **Equality Act (2010)**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6>

- **ITT criteria supporting advice – updated December 2021**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-criteria/initial-teacher-training-itt-criteria-and-supporting-advice>

- **Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach and of Entrants to Initial Teacher Training. Circular No: 4/99 Department of Education and Employment (DfEE)**

<https://products.ihf.com/Ohsis-SEO/652909.html>