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Primary Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances in Yorkshire and the Humber

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS FACING CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

in Yorkshire and the Humber

Context of the Study

The issue of recruiting and retaining teachers is a national problem. For example, the Select Committee on Education and Employments have regularly conveyed their concern over the years of the difficulties facing schools in attracting and retaining teachers. The struggle to attract teachers particularly in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances (SFCC) has seen the development of a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Teacher Recruitment and Retention fund in 2001 and the birth of other programmes and initiatives such as Teach Next, Teach First, Overseas Trained Teacher (OTT) programme, Flexible PGCEs; and housing allowances and bursaries.

Research into the views of trainees and newly qualified teachers' experiences in SFCC is scarce. The most notable is a previous study (Bubb, 2007) that explored the views of new teachers on their induction entitlement in challenging schools in inner London. There has been other research, however that looked at the effects of disadvantaged schools, especially in poorer neighbourhood or with large proportion of non English speaking pupils on teacher recruitment (see for example, CERI, 2007)¹; and staffing in remote rural schools in the East Midlands region (Bacon and Harrod, 2004)². Both studies found SFCC are likely to have the most trouble attracting teachers, and they are consequently more likely to employ teachers with the least experience.

This small scale study endeavours to build on the existing literature. It proposes to explore and analyse the realities of teacher recruitment and retention in SFCC in Yorkshire and the Humber from the perspectives of different stakeholders, and suggest potential strategies to address the emerging findings.

This report is structured into 4 sections:

- Section 1 identifies the research questions;
- Section 2 describes the methodology;
- Section 3 describes the findings; and
- Section 4 summarises the main themes emerging from the study and suggests strategies to address the findings.

SECTION ONE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This will explore the three core research questions:

1. What are the realities of working in a SFCC in Yorkshire and the Humber from a headteachers, experienced teachers, and trainees' perspective?
2. What does it take to be a SFCC teacher? This question addresses recruitment and preparation of teachers.

¹ Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (2007) *Education at a Glance 2007*. OECD.

² Bacon, E.; and Harrod, P. (2004). Rural Primary schools, Partnerships and recruitment: A Teacher Training Agency National Partnership Project (Phase II) East Midlands Region.

3. What support can stakeholders offer to prospective SFCC teachers? This question addresses induction, training (pre- and in-service training) and subsequently, retention.

SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

Guided by our research experience and in consultation with the PDS team of headteachers, we decided to collect our data using online questionnaires. Unlike other research tools, electronic questionnaires, we believed, it is the least intrusive on respondents' time, inexpensive, and less time consuming to administer, store, and analyse. The questionnaires were administered in two phases:

- **Phase One:** The first set of online questionnaires was made accessible to ITT trainees near the end of their school placement experience (June 2008).
- **Phase Two:** The subsequent online questionnaires were made live to experienced SFCC teachers, headteachers; and ITT providers in the beginning of the school year (September 2008).

To ensure a high response rate, the PDS team circulated the online questionnaires to all ITT providers and primary SFCC in the region. Snowball sampling was also used. The PDS headteachers contacted their colleagues from other schools and their contacts in universities. As a follow up, several e-mail reminders and telephone calls were made. After collecting the data, the questionnaires were analysed by frequency and examined thematically; and cross-case analysis of the views of different groups (headteachers, trainees, experienced teachers, and ITT tutors) were conducted.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 HEADTEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

3.1.1 Respondents' Schools

Guided by the TDA's definition of a SFCC, we proceeded to ask the 16 headteachers (10 females and 6 males) to select the characteristics that best describe their school. The respondents chose the following (see Table 1 below):

Table 1: School Characteristics	
<i>Question 2: Which of the characteristics below describe your school? (please tick all that applies)?</i>	
Number of Responses	
16	<i>It has a positive school ethos.</i>
15	<i>It has good relations with the community.</i>
14	<i>It has a warm welcoming environment.</i>
14	<i>Its staffs share a common vision.</i>
14	<i>It has a climate or atmosphere of trust and cooperation.</i>
14	<i>It engages learners in decision-making.</i>
9	<i>It engages parents in decision making.</i>
6	<i>It has a high proportion of pupils with SEN.</i>
5	<i>Its pupils have low prior attainment.</i>
4	<i>It serves an area of severe socio-economic disadvantage.</i>
4	<i>Its pupils have low self-esteem.</i>
2	<i>Its pupils have poor motivation.</i>
2	<i>It has difficulty maintaining pupil numbers.</i>
1	<i>Its parents do not value education.</i>
1	<i>It has high proportion of pupils who speak languages other than English.</i>
1	<i>It has a high proportion of transient pupils (e.g., refugees, travellers, children in care).</i>

The responses indicate that headteachers in SFCC did not necessarily refer exclusively to TDA's range of standards:³ poor home-school-community relations or material deprivation and poverty. They portrayed their schools instead as enjoying encouraging features such as, a positive school ethos and a shared vision, an engaging environment of trust and cooperation, and good relations with the community.

³ TDA. *Guidance on the National Occupational Standards for Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances*. Accessed at: http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/n/nos_guidance_schools_facing_challenging.pdf

3.1.2 Teacher Recruitment

Despite the good teacher recruitment rate described by the headteachers in this study (see Table 2), a large majority of the respondents (11 out of 16) stated that their school "sometimes" struggles to recruit teachers.

Table 2: Teacher Recruitment over Three Years	
<i>Question 3: In the past three years, how many teachers were recruited in your school?</i>	
Number of Responses	
1	0
5	1-2
6	2-4
2	5-6
1	7 and Over
0	No answer

On this, some headteachers wrote:

"... There were plenty of applications, but the calibre of applicants was not too impressive."

"... There are plenty of NQTs, but they need to be the best to teach in schools such as this."

"The school used to have a really bad reputation and in the early days it was hard to get anyone. If I rang for supply cover, I never said what school it was until the person said if they could come or not. Now, it isn't that hard to recruit, but I prefer a good NQT to train up rather than someone more experienced with strongly established practice- although that practice may be very good."

"Depending on the key stage... We also find we have to recruit a new temporary foundation stage teacher mid year to accommodate the second intake."

"The numbers of good candidates for posts in a Catholic school are limited. This area does not have a university on the doorstep so candidates have to have reason to apply. The area is low wage with a limited variety of employment opportunities."

3.1.3 Teacher Wastage and Turnover⁴

According to DCSF funded research⁵ conducted in 2005, teacher turnover and wastage rates over three years (2002-2004) were higher in the primary phase for women than men. This to some degree is seen to be the result of several factors including maternity leave,

⁴ To complement the DCSF's definitions, throughout we will be referring to "Leavers" as teachers who leave full time posts regardless whether permanent or fixed; "Turnover" as full-time teachers resigning or finishing their contracts whatever their destination (regardless whether they go to a maintained school or leave the sector); and "Wastage" as full time teachers leaving but not moving to a full time post in another maintained school.

⁵ Smither, A. and Robinson, P. (2005). *Teacher Turnover, Wastage, and Movements between Schools*. London, DCSF.

reduction in pupil numbers and the "greying" teaching workforce. The DCSF study also found teacher turnover rate tended to be lower among older than new or young teachers who have not "settled in."

Examining the figures for teacher wastage and turnover over three years in the SFCC in this study, our headteachers informed us that:

- 7 schools in the region had lost 1 to 2 teachers;
- 6 schools had lost 3 to 4 teachers; and
- 1 school had lost 5 to 6 teachers.

According to the headteachers, the wastage and turnover of their teachers seem to be mostly related to retirement and maternity leave (see Table 3):

Table 3: Reasons for "Leavers"	
<i>Question 6. Please tick the TOP THREE reasons given by teachers for leaving the school?</i>	
Number of Responses	
14	<i>Other Reasons: "maternity leave cover & NQT wishing to move region" "retirement" "Career break to focus on family."</i>
3	<i>Unable to get the life-work balance right.</i>
3	<i>The paucity of opportunities for promotion.</i>
2	<i>The driving distances.</i>
1	<i>The problem of employment for partners.</i>
1	<i>The difficult challenge of teaching.</i>

3.1.4 Survival Skills and Strategies

In the context of schools such as the SFCC that are seen to suffer from poor teacher retention, we felt it was important to identify the:

1. Type of teachers headteachers seek to hire and
2. Characteristics of 'successful teachers' who remain in SFCC.

Hence, we asked headteachers what they thought are the skills and/or strategies needed to teach in a primary SFCC. Respondents disclosed various but interrelated characteristics including (see Table 4):

1. Attitudes and Personal Characteristics: sense of humour, tenacity, tolerance, proactive, team player, flexible, creative, dedicated, good listener, able to prioritise and delegate, stand for their views, flexible, etc.

2. Pedagogy and Pupils' Development- know how pupils learn, ability to personalise learning, an understanding of SEN/EAL/NTE and strategies to support different learners, etc.
3. Multi-agency- Accessing help, support, and advice from other sources/ professionals (including the community, parents, and other linked services).
4. Behaviour Management- Good class control, firm behaviour management, etc.

Table 4: Skills and Strategies Needed to Work in SFCC
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<i>Question 8: What do you think are the skills and/or strategies needed to teach in a primary school facing challenging circumstances? (please write below)</i>
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"Sense of humour, flexibility, tolerance and understanding, respect for others, patience, proactiveness and tenacity, creativity, persistence, and dedication."

"... To recognise that neither your own belief/opinion need not always be right nor those of others necessarily wrong... Recognise that changing circumstances (social or otherwise) means that one must be willing to question ones own beliefs etc and modify/change these when necessary!"

"Availability of different strategies, support from Local Authority, money to be able to access extra staff and resources"

"- Good humour!

- Tenacity

- Sometimes being "Bloody minded" enough to stand up to "The powers that be!"

"Broad shoulders!"

- A realisation that you will not achieve everything

- An ability to prioritise/ delegate; and

- An ability to say no at times"

"An ability to spot strengths and build on them. Plenty of tolerance and understanding whilst maintaining a firm approach regarding what kind of behaviours/attitudes are acceptable. Positive approaches to managing all aspects of the job. The ability to build good positive relationships with colleagues and pupils. Humour - "Tigger" thinking. The ability to be creative and innovation - presenting tasks in exciting, stimulating ways."

"Teamwork, leadership, shared goals and common vision."

"I firmly believe that you need to be an excellent teacher with a very thick skin! You need to set achievable but challenging goals for your pupils, stay positive all the time, cope with everything that the pupils, parents, other staff and LA throw at you and still turn up for work everyday smiling."

"Positive attitudes

- Support from colleagues

- Realistic targets that improve morale

- Less Government blame & interference"

"Strong leadership with headteacher driving shared vision, solid teamwork with everyone working for the good of all pupils, good home school partnership. Good working relationships with agencies. Consistent approach to issues concerning behaviour. A well-developed sense of humour and the ability to go home and try not to think about school."

"- Patience, flexibility, awareness of the bigger picture

- Ability to personalise learning

- Ability to work with other colleagues- team work

- Good communication skills

- Ability to make learning as inspiring and engaging as possible

- Positive behaviour management strategies, and

- Excellent understanding of SEN/EAL/NTE and strategies to support these pupils"

"Teaching wise, in any school, and good class control is essential, as are the type of leadership qualities which perhaps cannot be learnt, but only be born with."

"Know how children learn, behaviour management classroom organisation. Love of children and enjoyment of teaching and all that goes with it. Flexibility, good relationships with pupils, parents and staff, team player, care for others."

"- Excellent behaviour management skills founded on making

- Very positive relationships with children

- Excellent assessment for learning

- An understanding that learning needs to be fun

- Very high expectations

- A positive outlook and tenacity and

- A good sense of humour"

"The same as for any school teacher, but the best teachers are needed to cope with some very challenging children (and parents)... The ability to access help, support, and advice for a whole range of sources/professionals is very important. This is increasingly important as the role of school extends even out into the community and other linked services...

An ability to work collaboratively in challenging and occasionally very difficult/harrowing situations... To be able to listen to and act upon appropriate advice given..."

3.2 EXPERIENCED TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

In the hope of identifying the factors that have transformed some individuals from enthusiastic novices into robust practitioners adamant not to leave their SFCC school, we invited experienced teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in SFCC to respond to our online questionnaire.

3.2.1 The Respondents' Profile

The 9 respondents who opted to be involved in this study were all British white teachers: 7 females and 1 male (1 did not disclose his/her gender). Their teaching experience tended to range from:

- Over 7 years (5 respondents) to
- 5 to 6 years (3 respondents) to
- 3-4 years (1 respondent).

The degrees held by respondents tended to vary (see Table 7), with some holding one qualification such as a BA/BSc, and some holding more than one qualification such as a BA/BSc and a GTP.

Table 7: Respondents' Type of Degrees	
<i>Question 10. What type of degree do you hold?</i>	
Number of Responses	
6	<i>Other qualifications: such as, NNEB (2 respondents); PG. Dip.; and M.Sc. (1 respondent); MEd (1 respondent); and MA (1 respondent)</i>
4	<i>Bachelor of Arts or Science (BA/ BSc)</i>
3	<i>Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP)</i>
3	<i>QTS</i>
2	<i>Bachelors of Education (BEd)</i>
2	<i>Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)</i>

3.2.2 Respondents' Schools

Similarly to the headteachers, a large number of the teachers in this study portrayed their school as a warm, welcoming, and engaging environment (see Table 8 below).

Table 8: Respondents' School Characteristics	
<i>Question 3. Which of the characteristics below describe your school? (please tick all that applies)?</i>	
Number of Responses	
9	<i>It has a warm welcoming environment.</i>

Table 8: Respondents' School Characteristics	
9	<i>It has a positive school ethos.</i>
9	<i>It has good relations with the community.</i>
9	<i>It engages learners in decision-making.</i>
9	<i>Its staffs share a common vision.</i>
8	<i>It has a climate or atmosphere of trust and cooperation.</i>
8	<i>It engages parents in decision making.</i>
3	<i>It has a high proportion of pupils with SEN.</i>
3	<i>It has difficulty maintaining pupil numbers.</i>
3	<i>Its pupils have low prior attainment.</i>
2	<i>It serves an area of severe socio-economic disadvantage.</i>
2	<i>Its pupils have low self-esteem.</i>
1	<i>Its pupils have poor motivation.</i>
1	<i>It has a high proportion of transient pupils (e.g., refugees, travellers, children in care).</i>
1	<i>Its parents do not value education.</i>

3.2.3 Teaching Experience in SFCC

Almost all respondents either described their experience working in a SFCC as "rewarding" or "moderately rewarding" (see Table 9 below). Given their satisfying experience in their current school, no wonder none of the teachers told us were contemplating a move to another school or a change of career.

Table 9: Views on Working in a SFCC	
<i>Question 4: In your opinion, working in a Primary School Facing Challenging Circumstances is (please tick):</i>	
Number of Responses	
5	<i>Rewarding.</i>
2	<i>Moderately rewarding.</i>
2	<i>Not rewarding.</i>

3.2.3 Survival Skills and Strategies

Asked what they envisage are the necessary skills and/or strategies needed to work in a SFCC, the respondents selected the following (see detailed responses in Table 10 below):

- Attitudes and Personal Characteristics- Ability to adapt, patience, commitment, sense of humour, honesty, resilience, determination, sympathy, etc.;
- Pedagogy and Pupils' Development- Planning lesson that are matched to pupils' needs and understanding pupils' learning; and

- Behaviour Management- Implementing effective behaviour management skills.

The skills and strategies identified by teachers are very similar to their counterparts (the headteachers). Personality and attitudes, subject knowledge and learners' development are all similar themes raised by both, the headteachers and experienced teachers. Likewise, we find the importance of behaviour management to be extremely accentuated by both groups in this study. Surprisingly, unlike the headteachers, multi-agency working was not identified by the teachers as an integral part of their survival in SFCC.

Table 10: Skills and Strategies Needed to Work in SFCC	
<i>Question 5. What do you think are the necessary skills and/or strategies needed to work in a primary school facing challenging circumstances? (please tick all that apply)</i>	
Number of Responses	
9	<i>Acknowledge and reward appropriate behaviour.</i>
8	<i>Be patient.</i>
7	<i>Address behavioural issues at once.</i>
6	<i>Re-arrange your class to minimise disruption.</i>
6	<i>Stick to a routine.</i>
4	<i>Ensure you have some prior experiences with diverse children/ families.</i>
4	<p><i>Other skills/ strategies: Resilience, determination, genuine care for others, communication skills, effective behaviour management skills, people skills. Strategies to unpick established behaviour patterns and to change local attitudes from negative to positive. Strategies to engage with 'hard to reach' families. Team building techniques."</i></p> <p><i>"Patience Commitment Sense of humour Team player Honest Approachable."</i></p> <p><i>"The ability to redo planning several times to make it work for those particular children, not just redo last years. To be able to adapt and fast. To keep up to date- especially child protection, etc. And, be prepared to speak out. A good memory helps. And, finally, to be able to create that 'can do' environment."</i></p> <p><i>"Passion for the job!"</i></p> <p><i>"Good understanding of the socio economic disadvantages of the area. Provide a safe, friendly environment with consistency (routines). Behavioural system consistent throughout the whole school. Reward positive behaviour. Sense of humour is important."</i></p>

3.3 TRAINEES' PERSPECTIVES

The importance of ITT school based-placements experience on trainees' long held future beliefs on teaching and learning has been highlighted by many studies (see for example Kennedy, 1997⁶ and Melnick and Zeichner, 1995). With this in mind, we proceeded to explore whether the placement experience in a SFCC has influenced their choice of school setting.

3.3.1 Trainees' Profile

Out of the 37 respondents in this study, 17 trainees declared they were completing a PGCE (46%); 13 a GTP qualification (35%) and 3 (8%) an RTP qualification. All respondents were English white with 35 of the respondents being female and 2 male.

Describing their SFCC placement, trainees chose the following characteristics (see Table 4 below):

Table 4: Trainees' Placement Experience	
<i>Question 4. Which of these schools describe your placement school? (Please tick all that apply)</i>	
Number of Responses	
27	<i>It has a warm welcoming environment</i>
25	<i>It has a positive school ethos.</i>
23	<i>It has a climate or atmosphere of trust and cooperation.</i>
21	<i>It engages learners in decision-making.</i>
19	<i>It serves an area of severe socio-economic disadvantage.</i>
19	<i>It has good relations with the community.</i>
19	<i>Its staffs share a common vision.</i>
13	<i>It engages parents in decision making.</i>
13	<i>It has a high proportion of pupils with SEN.</i>
12	<i>Its pupils have low prior attainment.</i>
9	<i>Its parents do not value education.</i>
7	<i>Its pupils have poor motivation.</i>
4	<i>Its pupils have low self-esteem.</i>
4	<i>It has high proportion of pupils who speak languages other than English.</i>
2	<i>It has a high proportion of transient pupils (e.g., refugees, travellers, children in care).</i>
2	<i>It has difficulty maintaining pupil numbers.</i>
2	<i>It struggles to retain teachers.</i>

⁶ Kennedy, M. (1997). *Defining an Ideal Teacher Education Program*. Washington, DC, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Melnick, S. L.; and Zeichner, K. M. (1995). *Teacher Education for Cultural Diversity: Enhancing the Capacity of Teacher Education Institutions to Address Diversity Issues*. East Lansing, MI, National Centre for Research on Teacher Learning.

Table 4: Trainees' Placement Experience	
1	<i>It struggles to recruit teachers.</i>

ITT trainees seem to find their experience of teaching in SFCC rich and powerful to such an extent that 81% of the respondents have expressed willingness to apply to a similar type of school (see Table 5a). Perhaps it is schools' commitment to staff development and training or its comprehensive behaviour management policy that has captivated them. It is difficult to speculate which factor/s have influenced their views. A follow up study into trainees' final choice of school will help inform ITT, CPD, and the recruitment and retention of teachers in SFCC.

Table 5a: Reasons for Applying for a SFCC Teaching Post	
<i>Question 6. Please choose the reason/s for applying/ not applying to teach in such a school. (Tick all that apply)</i>	
Number of Responses	
21	<i>Because it has a commitment to staff development and training.</i>
18	<i>Because it operates a comprehensive behaviour management policy.</i>
17	<i>Because it is happy to recruit NQTs.</i>
16	<i>Because its staff are committed to addressing Ofsted's key issues.</i>
5	<i>Because it focuses on student attendance.</i>

It is worthwhile mentioning that the 19% who claimed they would not apply to a SFCC is mainly because they thought the school has a very challenging pupil population, a migrant population, and it is in a community of extreme poverty and deprivation (see Table 5b below):

Table 5b: Reasons for NOT Applying for a SFCC Teaching Post	
<i>Question 6. Please choose the reason/s for applying/ not applying to teach in such a school. (Tick all that apply)</i>	
Number of Responses	
10	<i>Because it has a very challenging pupil population, with extremely high SEN demands of all kinds.</i>
6	<i>Because it has a migrant population, many of whom have low literacy and/or English as an Additional Language (EAL) issues.</i>
6	<i>Because it is in a community of extreme poverty and deprivation.</i>
3	<i>Because it has a crumbling physical environment.</i>
3	<i>Because it has lost public support.</i>

Asked what will convince some of them to apply for a post at a SFCC, respondents chose the following (see Table 6):

Table 6: Conditions for Applying to a SFCC	
<i>Question 7. What would convince you to apply for a post at a challenging school? (Please tick all that apply):</i>	

Table 6: Conditions for Applying to a SFCC	
Number of Responses	
29	<i>If the school is warm and welcoming.</i>
28	<i>If the school has a shared positive ethos.</i>
25	<i>If it offers a good quality mentoring support to NQTs.</i>
24	<i>If the staff share a sense of ownership.</i>
16	<i>If it offers NQTs a teaching job.</i>
16	<i>If it happens to be located close to where I live.</i>
11	<i>If it offers NQTs some sort of financial incentive.</i>
9	<i>If it has access to high quality EPD to encourage my retention.</i>
7	<i>If it offers an affordable housing for teachers.</i>
4	<i>If it offers rapid promotion to successful teachers.</i>

Clearly from the above, if schools are to entice new teacher recruits into their SFCC, it is important that NQTs are offered a good quality mentoring support by their prospective school, training in behaviour management by their ITT provider and their prospective school, and they are offered a nurturing environment to grow by their future employer.

3.4 ITT TUTORS' PERSPECTIVES

The ITT questionnaire aimed at identifying the:

1. Number of placements offered to trainees in SFCC;
2. Difficulties in placing trainees in such schools; and
3. Type of support offered to trainees prior and during their placements in SFCC.

The online questionnaire dedicated to ITT staff had a very low response rate: Just 3 tutors from 3 institutions in the region responded to our questionnaire.

The Quality of Placements

Respondents in general felt the placement offered to trainees “could be better” if the SFCC:

1. Were not reluctant to offer placements;
2. Had enough trained mentors; and
3. Were not reluctant to take on their trainees.

3.4.2 Preparation for Teaching Placements in SFCC

In general, tutors claimed, trainees are well prepared for their school-based placements in SFCC. In addition to ensuring they have completed at least one prior placement experience, tutors provided training in child protection, an overview of what the issues of SFCC are, and ensured they had read beforehand on the subject of SFCC.

SECTION FOUR: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to emphasise this research is a small scale study that has consulted a handful of stakeholders. Therefore, it cannot provide firm answers to the complex question of recruitment and retention of SFCC teachers in Yorkshire and the Humber. However, the study does identify several issues, raises important questions that merit further research, and suggests some avenues to address the emerging research findings.

This section will summarise the research findings and suggest some recommendations.

4.2.1 Prerequisites for SFCC Teachers

Clearly, the headteachers, experienced teachers, and trainees in this study seem to agree that working in a SFCC is not without its challenges and yet it is rewarding. Whilst research and common sense tells us that teacher knowledge of the subject and subject matter knowledge are necessary prerequisites for effective teaching, our respondents tell us there is a second part of the equation: personal characteristics, understanding of pupils' needs, and implementing appropriate and consistent behaviour management skills are a must.

The headteachers and teachers in this study advise us, it is not only important for SFCC teachers to understand and teach their subject, but they also need to:

1. Have a strong knowledge of child and adolescent development;
2. Have an understanding of their family and community background;
3. Be able to diagnose their learning needs; and
4. Be able to apply various strategies to support their learners.

Towards the above, our respondents tell us, SFCC teachers need a nurturing warm and secure environment; they need the drive, enthusiasm, empathy and understanding; and importantly the skills to lead and manage their pupils' behaviour and education.

It is hence important if we are to retain and continue to recruit effective teachers that they are offered the necessary training and support to excel in their work especially in behaviour management. The TDA's Guidance on the National Occupational Standards for Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools highlight this very well. New teachers need to be trained on how to set up workable support and action plans to address 'difficult' classes and help learners.

4.2.2 The Recruitment of SFCC Teachers

Despite good retention rates, the headteachers in this study claim their schools "sometimes" struggle to recruit high quality teachers. This does not come as a surprise. Frequent reports by the Parliamentary Select Committees have highlighted continuing recruitment difficulties in SFCC (cited in MacBeath et al., 2005⁷). Schools such as those

⁷ MacBeath, J.; Gray, G.; Cullen, J.; Cunningham, H.; Ebbutt, D.; Frost, D.; Stewart, S.; and Swaffield, S. (2005). *Responding to Challenging Circumstances: Evaluation of the 'Schools Facing Exceptionally Challenging Circumstances' Project.* Cambridge, University of Cambridge.

surveyed in the study are regularly disadvantaged by their uncompetitive approach in attracting, supporting, and rewarding high quality teachers (Ibid). Perhaps it is worthwhile that SFCC look into their recruitment and selection procedures and work to improve their marketing of the benefits of teaching in SFCC as highlighted so well by both headteachers and teachers in this study. Also, it may be useful for government agencies to consider requiring recipients of studentships and loans to teach for a selected period of time in a SFCC.

4.2.3 Improving Capacity in School-Based Placements

Finally, the 3 ITT tutors in this study claim some SFCC are reluctant to offer places to their trainees. Perhaps, it may be worthwhile to offer some hesitant SFCC the chance to pair up with other SFCC offering school placement opportunities. It may also be advantageous to propose to train some mentors to help support trainees whilst on placement.