

Recruit inspirational teachers: Develop a partnership with Teach First

Teach First works with schools and other organisations to help close the gap between achievement amongst pupils from low income communities and their more affluent peers.

This year, 182 participants will begin teaching in schools across the West Midlands. We have been working in partnership with schools in the region since 2007 and have placed 700 participants in the area – all with a commitment to raising the achievement, access and aspirations of young people.

We recruit high calibre, passionate individuals to teach in schools where the majority of pupils come from the poorest families in the UK, according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This includes recent graduates, as well as those who have been working for some time. In order to be accepted onto the programme, these individuals – known as participants – go through a rigorous recruitment and selection process which includes an online application, a day-long assessment centre, reference checks, a Subject Knowledge Audit, and additional preparatory work, including a school observation, readings and reflection. Before they begin teaching in September, all participants complete a rigorous six-week Summer Institute – a residential course which establishes their understanding of educational disadvantage and their role in addressing it, as well as educational theory and practice. They also gain teaching experience and spend time in their school. Summer Institute marks the first stage of their training which continues in school.

All participants work towards a PGCE and QTS in their first year, and also have access to a range of leadership skills training and development sessions throughout the two years to help them become effective teachers.

Teach First was established in 2002 by Brett Wigdortz, the charity's Chief Executive Officer. Starting initially in London, we now work in nine regions of England and also in Wales.

Since working in the West Midlands, hundreds of pupils have benefitted from working with Teach First teachers.

Take Rondene, for example. Rondene, 16, is a year 11 pupil at the International School in Tile Cross, East Birmingham where she is taught by six Teach First teachers. Since 2007, 27 Teach First teachers have worked at the school, where over 90% of pupils come from homes with income in the lowest third of the country.

Rondene is a member of 'The Awesome Club', which was formed at the start of this year by five Teach First teachers at the school. According to Clair Fenlon, a Teach First teacher who is Head of Year 8 and in her third year at the International School, The Awesome Club aims to raise the aspirations and achievement of the 35 students involved, and their access to Higher Education and professional career options by engaging with them along three dimensions of personal development, professional development and citizenship. In personal development, students are required to select a topic for independent study; most topics suggested are outside of the normal

school curriculum and range from Philosophy to Economics. Each student in The Awesome Club is provided with resources to help them learn, and paired with a coach whom they meet once every two weeks for up to an hour. The coaches do not teach; instead their role is to help the students set targets for their progress, and support them.

Rondene is now working on applications for sixth form colleges. She says: “The work we do through The Awesome Club really helps me - my coach has been brilliant. Beyond that, I want to be a Member of Parliament. My experience with Ms Stuart, (Gisela Stuart, MP for Birmingham Edgbaston) which my coach helped me to organise, really inspired me. She did warn me that it wasn't easy and that politics is more of a lifestyle than a job, but I think I have what it takes. Before that, I want to study law at university.”

We have worked with a range of organisations, including schools, to develop a set of goals we aim to achieve with our partners over the next ten years to help achieve long term educational equality. We are now working closely with schools across the country, including the West Midlands, to establish how we can work together to achieve these goals in each region. The goals are:

1. Narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy at primary school by 90%
2. Narrow the gap in GCSE attainment at secondary school by 44%
3. Ensure young people develop key strengths, including resilience and wellbeing, to support high aspirations
4. Narrow the gap in the proportion of young people in education, employment or training one year after compulsory education
5. Narrow the gap in university graduation, including from the 25% most selective universities, by 8%

To find out how your school can work with Teach First, visit www.teachfirst.org.uk/forschools or if you would like us to hold an information session at your school and to hear from existing partners, contact [Anita Wheeler](#), Regional Director, Teach First, West Midlands.

[Anita Wheeler was Head Teacher at a Solihull Primary school and later at two Dudley Primary Schools before joining Teach First. We are grateful to her for this article which is intended to open governors' eyes to at least one alternative strategy for recruitment as distinct from the “traditional one” of simply advertising in the local media and/or the Times Educational Supplement or of using agencies].