



Gateshead Primary SCITT

Fitness to Teach/Study Policy 2021/22

Fitness to Teach- Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do I have to complete an Occupational Health assessment before I start my Initial Teacher Training?
2. What does the assessment involve?
3. What happens if I don't disclose a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue?
4. Who gets my information?
5. What happens next?
6. What happens if I disclose a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue?
7. What happens if I don't complete my Occupational Health Assessment?
8. What kind of support can I access?
9. What if my health circumstances change during my period of study?
10. Are there any conditions which will automatically prevent me from pursuing my Initial Teacher Training?
11. Will my school placement be informed about the outcome of my Occupational Health assessment?

1. Why do I have to complete an Occupational Health assessment before I start my Initial Teacher Training?

All applicants for Initial Teacher Training, including routes such as Teach First and School Direct, must complete an assessment to ensure that they meet the Secretary of State's requirements for physical and mental Fitness to Teach.

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.

2. What does the assessment involve?

To begin with the Gateshead Primary SCITT team will send you information about this process with your offer letter.

3. What happens if I don't disclose a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue?

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 you have a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue which has a bearing on your occupational health you are required to disclose these on the fitness questionnaire. If you decline to disclose a condition which affects your Fitness to Teach, or give false information then it may affect your ability to continue with your studies.

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

4. Who gets my information?

Your answers are confidential and your completed questionnaire is sent to Occupational Health at Gateshead Council who carry out Occupational Health assessments for all students on our Initial Teacher Training courses here at Gateshead Primary SCITT.

You should complete the health questionnaire as fully and honestly as possible.

Occupational health may ask you to provide further information about some of your answers if they feel it is relevant.

5. What happens next?

Once the assessment process is complete you will receive an email from the informing you of the outcome, which will fall into one of three groups:

- a. **Fit to Teach:** you 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:** you are in good health but have conditions which are likely to affect your ability to teach either all subjects, or certain specified subjects. However, these conditions are not serious enough to make you 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:** your condition makes you unfit for the teaching profession. You will not normally be included in this category unless you have a condition likely to interfere seriously with regular and efficient teaching of either general subjects, or the subject you intend to

specialise in (e.g. P.E. or science subjects), or you have a condition that may carry a risk to the safety or welfare of the pupils.

6. What happens if I disclose a disability, long-term medical condition, or mental health issue?

If you have a disability, medical condition, or mental health issue then it's likely that Occupational Health will request that you meet with one of their doctors for a face-to-face appointment before making a final judgment on your Fitness to Teach. This is an opportunity to identify any areas of the course where you may need support or reasonable adjustments.

On some occasions Occupational Health may seek further information from your GP or specialist to clarify matters further.

If any need for support or reasonable adjustments is identified as part of your Occupational Health assessment, you need to contact Disability & Wellbeing Support at the Gateshead Primary SCITT in order to discuss how this can be implemented during your studies. Health Management staff have no direct role in arranging practical support at Gateshead Primary SCITT or on placement; these adjustments can only be made through Disability & Wellbeing Support.

7. What happens if I don't complete my Occupational Health Assessment?

Gateshead Primary SCITT must receive confirmation that you have filled in your Occupational Health Assessment before enrolment. You will not be able to enrol until you have done this.

8. What kind of support can I access?

The support you can access will depend on your individual circumstances, so you must liaise with the Programme Leader about your needs. Some examples of support provided for trainee teachers in the past are:

- Help with travel costs if you are unable to use public transport
- Assistive technology software
- Specialist ergonomic equipment
- Sessions with one-to-one study skills support tutors or specialist mentors

9. What if my health circumstances change during my period of study?

If there is a change in your health after you complete your Occupational Health assessment (e.g. you are diagnosed with a long-term serious medical condition), then you should contact the Programme Leader. It is likely that you will be re-referred to Occupational Health for a

further assessment, which will enable us to advise and support you based on your new circumstances.

10. Are there any conditions which will automatically prevent me from pursuing my Initial Teacher Training?

There is no specific list of conditions incompatible with teaching. If you have concerns then you can discuss them anonymously over the phone with Gateshead Primary SCITT staff or at a confidential 1:1 appointment with the Programme Leader .

11. Will my school placement be informed about the outcome of my Occupational Health assessment?

Not without your agreement. Under the Data Protection Act (1998), 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.

Gateshead Primary SCITT staff will pass on information given 'in confidence' only if there is a significant identified risk to the candidate/trainee concerned, or to pupils or others.

If you have been identified as Fit to Teach with reasonable adjustments, you should contact the Programme Leader at Gateshead Primary SCITT to discuss the support we can offer you and decide whether disclosure to the placement school is essential.

With your agreement a Learning & Teaching Support Agreement can be drawn up to outline support available at Gateshead Primary SCITT. This will outline suggestions for your support whilst on placement.

It should be noted that some impairments must be disclosed to the school and that your ability to succeed at your placement may be compromised if you are unwilling to disclose and accept the reasonable adjustments offered.

If you are found "Unfit to Teach" you will not be able to start your placement. Your Programme Leader in conjunction with the Lead School Headteacher will then work with you to decide whether you should withdraw from the course, defer or interrupt and undergo another Occupational Health assessment at a more appropriate time.

Additional information:

- Able to Teach: Guidance for Providers of Initial Teacher Training on Disability Discrimination and Fitness to Teach. Teacher Training Agency (2007)
- Education Act (2002)
- Equality Act (2010)

- ITT criteria supporting advice (July 2013)
 - Physical and Mental Fitness to Teach and of Entrants to Initial Teacher Training
- Circular No: 4/99 Department of Education and Employment (DfEE)