



## Improving trainee teacher retention by analysing personality styles



### The research project

In the UK, trainee teachers undertake a challenging postgraduate programme of academic study and structured school-based training, and although most go on to become successful teachers, not all complete the course. Trainee retention has therefore become a serious issue for the teaching profession, leading to a greater emphasis on early identification of less robust trainees in order to ensure the right support is provided at the right time.



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This strategy is being explored in a five-year research programme commissioned by leading teacher training provider Suffolk and Norfolk School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and delivered by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, the Relationships Foundation and The Open University.

The Suffolk and Norfolk SCITT is currently using the Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire® (CPSQ) for teachers (designed and developed by Admissions Testing) as part of its trainee induction process. The CPSQ measures 'non-cognitive' factors or personal styles of behaving in order to understand how an individual approaches tasks, relates to others and copes with demands. This allows trainers to identify those behavioural competencies that can impact on performance and wellbeing. It can be used to target and tailor training and support more accurately. Trainees complete the CPSQ in around 20–40 minutes, online and on demand, with results delivered instantly via an online platform, and across seven competency areas including 'coping with demands', 'person-centred communication' and 'self-management'.

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## About Suffolk and Norfolk School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)

The largest SCITT in the country, providing a range of school-based routes into teaching for around 220 trainees who are supported on courses leading to careers in primary and secondary education.

## About CPSQ

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) is designed to assess an individual's values and behaviours, with the results used to support employee selection, retention and development strategies. Specific versions of the CPSQ report have been developed for admissions staff working in higher education, for healthcare employers and trainers, and for teachers and teacher trainers.

## About Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing

We are part of the University of Cambridge and have been working with UK and worldwide universities, governments and employers for more than 15 years. Our admissions assessments and personal styles analyses are a global mark of excellence that set the quality standard, and provide a fair measure of skills that help employers make informed decisions and enhance their selection processes.

Interim findings have proved very interesting. For example, when the CPSQ was used to compare trainee profiles, those who withdrew from the course recorded low scores across most behavioural competency areas, especially 'coping with demands'. Those classified as 'strongest', however, reported significantly higher CPSQ scores for competencies such as 'self-management' and 'person-centred communication'.

Anna Richards, Executive Leader at the Suffolk and Norfolk SCITT, is impressed with the trial so far: 'The CPSQ has helped us gain a greater insight into our trainees and their styles of behaviour and has helped inform how we support them,' she comments. 'Not only does the CPSQ help trainees reflect on their own behaviour styles and needs, it also allows us to make early, targeted interventions. For example, if a trainee's answers suggest they may have an issue with 'coping with demands' we have made sure that they work with a particularly experienced and supportive personal tutor and mentor.'

Anna's team is also trialling improvements made to the online platform in order to make the CPSQ easier to use: 'The platform now is much more user friendly and intuitive than its previous version. The facility to automatically send reminder emails to trainees has proved a real time saver. The team at Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing are also very responsive and answer any queries.'

## Personalised teacher training

This study is thought to be the first in the UK to link personality traits and associated behavioural competencies with teacher retention. It shows that tools such as the CPSQ can act as an early warning system for trainers, while also helping trainees develop those personal capabilities likely to support course participation and retention. Commenting on the research, Lyn Dale, Admissions Testing Assessment Psychologist and Senior Assessment

Manager, said: 'This has been a great opportunity to combine the expertise of all research collaborators, and I am proud to say that Admission Testing's participation has offered new insights into the risk factors involved in trainee retention and withdrawal. We now hope that our findings can be used practically, to personalise on-boarding for example, and to underpin proactive pastoral care and mentoring initiatives.'

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### Find out more

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