



# Teachers as Writers



## Writer Co-mentor Brief: Teachers as Writers 2016-17

Arvon is inviting applications from professional writers to play a key role as co-mentors with primary and secondary teachers in a research project in South West England.

Arvon, the Open University, and the University of Exeter are working together on an 18-month research project funded by Arts Council England, The Rayne Foundation and The United Kingdom Literacy Association. **Teachers as Writers** (TaW) will explore how writers and teachers can work together to improve student outcomes and what impact this engagement has on teachers' practice, skills and identities as writers, and young people's motivation, confidence and skills. It will also explore the impact of the work on professional writers.

TaW is not a traditional "writers in schools" project led by writers. It is a research project which seeks to position writers and teachers as learning partners. It innovatively frames the work as **co-mentoring** where professional writers and teachers work together for their own mutual benefit (as writers and pedagogues) and in order to support the development of student writers.

Each writer will be matched with two teachers and supported to develop a reciprocal co-mentoring relationship with them. Writers will need to commit to:

- a half-day professional development day including work on co-mentoring and co-planning the teaching of narrative writing with their teachers (18 May 2016) in Exeter;
- one visit to each school to co-teach and evaluate a lesson together with their teachers (June 2016);
- being interviewed by the research team and documenting their own learning (across the project);
- a one-day sharing of their co-mentoring work with all participating writer-teacher partnerships (29 September 2016 in Exeter);
- preparing to share their work at a Dissemination Conference if required (March, 2017) in Exeter.

**Fee:** £1,375 (based on £250 a day for 5.5 days)

**Deadline for expression of interest:** 5pm on Monday 22 February 2016  
Interviews will take place by arrangement.

You can find out more about the project at <http://www.arvon.org/schoolsandgroups/teachers-as-writers/>

Arvon is seeking 8 writers who are open to learning and shaping co-mentoring relationships with teachers in order to improve student outcomes.

Essential criteria:

1. An experienced writer who has had at least two works published

2. Experience of planning, undertaking and evaluating creative writing projects in partnership with primary/secondary schools
3. Commitment to reflective practice and interest in exploring co-mentoring with teachers
4. Understanding of own creativity and skilled in developing the writing practices of others
5. Ability to build relationships based on trust, collaboration and open dialogue
6. Excellent timekeeping, organisation and general conduct
7. Supportive of Arvon's ethos and with strong commitment to promoting diversity and inclusive practice

#### Desirable criteria

- Based in the South West of England.
- Experience of documenting and evaluating own work in schools.

If your application is successful, you will be required to provide us with a current Enhanced DBS Certificate. If you do not hold a current DBS check then we can advise you on how to apply.

Travel costs to schools and meetings will be covered by the project budget.

For the duration of the project you will be managed by Becky Swain, Arvon's Head of Learning and Participation.

#### Application

We are inviting expressions of interest consisting of a short letter (maximum 1000 words) stating reasons for interest in the co-mentoring role, accompanied by a CV detailing relevant publication history and relevant teaching or facilitation experience.

Your letter should detail why you want to engage in the project as a co-mentor and what appeals to you about the project role, and working with Arvon. Please include:

- details of your relevant qualities, skills, experience and knowledge, addressing the criteria given in the brief above
- your approach to this role and what you would hope to achieve during your time with the project.

**Please send Expressions of Interest to Becky Swain, Head of Learning and Participation [becky.swain@arvon.org](mailto:becky.swain@arvon.org) by 5pm on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 along with a completed Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (download [here](#))**

If you have any questions about the brief please email Becky at [Becky.swain@arvon.org](mailto:Becky.swain@arvon.org)

#### About Arvon

Arvon is England's leading creative writing charity, celebrated for its unique ability to discover and develop the writer in everyone. It has been described by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy as '*the single most important organisation for sharing and exploring creative writing in the UK*'.

Arvon runs an annual programme of residential courses at its three writing houses, in Devon, Shropshire and Yorkshire. The week-long courses, led by highly respected authors, include a powerful mix of workshops, individual tutorials and time and space to write. Covering a diverse range of genres, from poetry and fiction to screenwriting and comedy, Arvon courses have provided inspiration to thousands of people at all stages of their writing lives. Grants are available to help with course fees. We also offer non-residential city-based creative writing courses.

At the heart of Arvon is the desire to encourage anyone, regardless of their background, to find their voice through writing. About a third of our activities are with groups from schools, youth and community groups and arts organisations, many from the most disadvantaged communities in the UK. [www.arvon.org](http://www.arvon.org)

## Arvon Ethos

At Arvon **everyone is a writer**, regardless of their writing experience or background. Creativity is innate in us all, everyone has a voice to be heard, and we are all about offering a space where people can discover this. We cultivate a welcoming atmosphere, as informal, fun and friendly as possible, where learning takes place as part of a 'community of writers'.

We believe **writing matters**, and time spent on writing is time well spent, nourishing the imagination and deepening the connection to self and world. We look to create the ideal conditions that allow people to immerse themselves in their imagination and creative process, away from the distractions of everyday life.

We believe in the importance of **the apprentice model of learning**– that creative writing is a craft that can be learnt, and one of the most powerful ways of learning is as apprentice to an expert. Arvon tutors are all published writers, chosen for both the quality of their expertise in the craft of writing and their generous desire to pass this on to others.

**Writing takes practice** – the best way of learning is by doing, and so the best way to improve writing is to write.

## Teachers as Writers

Arvon, the Open University, and the University of Exeter are working together on a two-year research project funded by Arts Council England, exploring how the opportunity for teachers to work with professional writers might change their understanding of being a writer, how they teach writing, and improve outcomes in writing for the children they teach.

Teachers as Writers will work with 16 teachers of students aged 8–14 living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage in rural and coastal areas of South West England, who are often found to be significantly under-achieving at school. The teachers will come to Totleigh Barton, Arvon's Devon centre, for a residential writing week led by authors [Steve Voake](#) and [Alicia Stubbersfield](#). Each writer will then work in a co-mentoring relationship with the teachers as they return to the classroom. The teachers' and their students' writing development will be documented over this period through a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) and qualitative case studies.

Arvon will work with partners in the South West, to reach schools where students may have least access to arts and culture and would benefit most from this opportunity. Existing research suggests that some teachers express low self-esteem as writers, do not write for creative purposes, and express concern about teaching writing. The project will evaluate whether by creating sustained opportunities for teachers to write and to learn from and with writers, there are beneficial impacts on classroom practice and on learner outcomes in writing.

You can find out more about Teachers as Writers [here](#)