

# **University of Leicester**

#### Initial Teacher Education inspection report

**Provider address** 

21 University Road Leicester LE1 7RF

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# Introduction

- 1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
- 2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

#### Key to inspection grades

- Grade 1 Outstanding
- Grade 2 Good
- Grade 3 Satisfactory
- Grade 4 Inadequate

#### Explanation of terms used in this report

**Attainment** is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

**Progress** is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

**Achievement** is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

# The provider

3. The School of Education, University of Leicester, works in partnership with a range of schools to provide initial teacher education leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the primary and secondary phases. The provider currently works with over 190 schools across both phases. It offers one year full-time postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) courses in primary and secondary education. Initial teacher education, leading to QTS, is offered in nine secondary subjects. Both courses include assessments at masters level to 60 credits. The School of Education is a significant contributor to the recruitment of newly qualified teachers in local schools.

#### A commentary on the provision

- 4. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes.
- Improved recruitment and retention.
- Trainees' excellent use of strategies to encourage good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- The capacity of trainees to critically reflect on and analyse their own practice.
- The high levels of enthusiasm, commitment to improvement and practical and academic expertise shown by provider staff which drives improvement and is raising the attainment of trainees
- High quality course materials and handbooks.

# Provision in the primary phase

#### Context

5. The School of Education currently works in partnership with 112 partner schools, mostly in the City of Leicester and Leicestershire local authority and in a range of rural and urban settings. It offers a one-year full-time postgraduate certificate in education. Courses are available in upper-primary, lower-primary and primary with French. There were 122 trainees enrolled on programmes across all routes at the time of inspection.

#### **Key strengths**

- 6. The key strengths are:
- recent improvements to the course which have resulted in rising attainment for trainees
- the improvements to the recruitment process which have resulted in higher levels of retention
- the promotion of trainees' understanding of equality and diversity so that they are very well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society
- trainees' very good preparation to encourage good behaviour and to recognise the link between good teaching and positive attitudes to learning
- the school based focus days which greatly enhance trainees' understanding of educational priorities and their confidence as trainee teachers
- the high quality staff who are experts in their field and whose specialist knowledge of national priorities informs their work with trainees.

#### Recommendations

- 7. In order to improve the provision and quality of training to raise trainees' attainment, the provider should:
- ensure feedback to trainees consistently makes reference to how trainees can improve their subject specific teaching skills and how well trainees are making progress against the Standards.
- 8. In order to improve the provider's capacity to improve, the provider should:
- capitalise on its partner committees to strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning.

# **Overall effectiveness**

- 9. Provision across the primary partnership is good and improving rapidly. In consequence trainees' attainment is good and has improved significantly over the last three years. It is likely that more than half of the current trainees will be outstanding on completion with slightly more than a tenth satisfactory. While there is good improvement across all of the Standards for QTS, the strongest gains are in professional knowledge and understanding. Previously underattaining groups, such as those following the lower-primary course, have closed the gap with other trainees, with three quarters predicted to be outstanding. Different groups, such as minority ethnic trainees and men, now perform as well as others. It is because of the success of the course that local headteachers hold trainees from the partnership in high esteem. In a number of schools headteachers and teacher mentors are former trainees.
- 10. Recruitment and retention on the course are good. Almost one quarter of the cohort is of minority ethnic heritage and their completion rates are higher than for rates overall. The recruitment targets for 2011 have been met and offers of places to male candidates have increased significantly. Recruitment days are rigorous and make good use of experienced colleagues from partner schools. Headteachers are well prepared for their duties as interviewers and appreciate the opportunity to play an active role in the partnership and have a positive impact on the quality of trainees selected. Gaps in knowledge or experience identified at the interview stage result in trainees being given additional precourse tasks and form the basis for their individual action plans, the first meeting with their tutors and their early targets.
- Course structure and content are good. Directed tasks for completion during 11. school experience placements cohere well with central training and build on trainees' growing experience and expertise. The setting of targets for trainees is a strength. These targets reflect the need to gather evidence of trainees' progress towards the Standards and to improve practice both as teachers and learners. Trainees are encouraged to reflect on their practice and identify what has gone well and what they can do to improve. This is a very successful strategy and has proved effective in helping them improve their teaching. Trainees receive useful written feedback from teacher mentors and visiting tutors but in some cases this lacks a sharp focus on how trainees can improve their subject specific skills or explicit reference to progress against the Standards. Teacher mentors' oral feedback on how well trainees have taught is of consistently good and often excellent guality. The best feedback uses skilled questioning to help trainees themselves identify the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and what they can do to improve.
- 12. Trainees are very well prepared to manage pupils' behaviour in classrooms and to promote positive attitudes to learning. This aspect of their training is a significant strength of the course. Trainees know that creating an exciting classroom environment and carefully matching their teaching to pupils' learning

### Grade: 2

needs will encourage positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. This is a theme which is woven into many aspects of the course. Trainees are well prepared to teach pupils with a range of learning needs, including those with special educational needs and learning difficulties and disabilities. Trainees greatly value the school based focus days, when they are able to observe best practice and discuss what they have seen with each other and with teachers. Headteachers say that teachers also value these days, both as recognition of their expertise and an opportunity to reflect on their own practice. Trainees are confident and well prepared to teach early reading skills and synthetic phonics. Many schools welcome the up-to-date knowledge that trainees bring to their school experience placements.

- 13. The high quality of the central training provided by the School of Education staff contributes significantly to trainees' good attainment. School-based training is of good and improving quality, and prepares trainees well for their future careers and for working with colleagues in schools. Trainees say that lectures and workshops are inspirational and based on best practice. Their dedicated, enthusiastic and expert lecturers effectively model those elements of best practice they expect to see trainees use in the classroom. The professional development strand provides trainees with the theoretical underpinning to effective practice and greatly enhances their understanding of child development. The partnership makes effective use of school-based expertise, for example by using skilled and experienced teachers as visiting lecturers. Teacher mentors, trainees and headteachers value the visiting tutors and the additional expertise they bring to monitoring and developing the skills of both trainees and teacher mentors. Teacher mentor evaluations of the training and support they receive are overwhelmingly positive.
- 14. The good personalisation of academic and pastoral support for trainees ensures that their learning needs are met very well. Trainees keep comprehensive, manageable and very well organised folders of evidence of their progress against the Standards and reflect on a weekly basis on how well things are going. The partnership promotes equality and diversity exceptionally well. Thanks to school experience placements in a range of schools, trainees are very well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society. They have a good understanding of issues such as the development of language skills for pupils new to English, the place of phonics teaching within this, and what represents the best of inclusive practice. The two days spent visiting a range of places of worship enhances trainees' understanding of religious and cultural diversity and their appreciation of how this might affect them as teachers. The inter-professional development day, when trainees work with social workers and speech therapists helps them understand the contribution fellow professionals make to the lives of children. Trainees have a good understanding of both statutory requirements and best practice with regard to safeguarding pupils and ensuring their well-being and safety is paramount.
- 15. The strength, commitment and coherence of the partnership are good. Headteachers and teacher mentors say that communications are excellent. They particularly value the high quality course materials and teaching experience handbooks. These set out the partnership's expectations very clearly so that all

partners know exactly what they are expected to do each week and where the focus of trainees' development lies. Schools are confident that any difficulties will be quickly addressed. They value the ready accessibility and excellent responsiveness of visiting tutors. Experienced and enthusiastic visiting tutors make regular visits to schools and engage in careful scrutiny of trainees' planning, their evidence of progress against the Standards and how well they are doing against their targets. There are joint lesson observations with schoolbased trainers, interviews with trainees and discussions with teacher mentors. School placements are very carefully planned to ensure they match trainees' needs and interests and provide them with a suitable balance of school experience.

#### The capacity for further improvement Grade: 1 and/or sustaining high quality

- 16. Leaders demonstrate outstanding capacity for further sustained improvement. Both trainees' attainment and completion rates have improved significantly. The range of the partnership's self-evaluation is increasingly effective in identifying strengths and areas for improvement and is contributing to bringing about significant improvements in the outcomes for trainees. Nevertheless headteachers are insufficiently capitalised upon in evaluating and planning for improvement. Improvement planning is clear and detailed and has a sharp focus on raising attainment and improving measurable outcomes for trainees. Outcome data are very carefully collated and analysed in order to identify trends and plan for improvement. The attainment of groups of trainees is very carefully tracked and analysed and effective strategies put in place to address underachievement and close gaps in attainment. For example, the attainment of trainees following the lower-primary course had been much lower than those on other courses. The partnership took highly effective action to address this, and as a result the attainment of this group of trainees has risen significantly. The partnership has analysed patterns of non- and late-completion and has taken very effective action to reduce the number of trainees who fail to complete the course. The partnership has been proactive in seeking the views of current and recent trainees and has acted very quickly on their concerns and recommendations. Both current trainees and newly qualified teachers are members of the partnership steering committee.
- 17. The partnership is highly responsive to the needs and aspirations of partner schools. The recent piloting of new partnership arrangements, involving the greater devolvement of resources and the development of the role of school based coordinators is emblematic of the openness and ambition of the partnership. The success of these new arrangements is the result of a thorough review of the existing partnership arrangements involving provider staff, current trainees, former trainees and school based partners. An initial evaluation of the impact of the pilot has been undertaken and adjustments to make arrangements more effective will be put in place for next year. External examiners' reports confirm the accuracy of the partnership's assessments of how well trainees are

doing and also comment positively on the partnership's responsiveness to suggestions for improvement.

- 18. The partnership has been notably effective in securing a high quality workforce to realise its potential and drive improvement. School of Education tutors are highly regarded within their fields of expertise. Many are nationally recognised figures, having for example played a leading role in the development of mathematics teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage through membership of the Williams review panel. The School of Education has close involvement with science education research projects within the European Union and at the Science Learning Centre. Other areas of particular expertise include the teaching of local history, the use of information and communication technology in education and citizenship education.
- 19. The partnership steering committee contains representatives from schools, former trainees who are newly qualified teachers and others, and is an effective vehicle for course development. While planning for improvement is generally strong these plans are not sufficiently well understood across the partnership and the steering committee is insufficiently involved in their development. The course improvement plan is the result of a rigorous evaluation of the quality of provision and outcomes for trainees and is a powerful tool for raising attainment.
- 20. The recent and significant rise in trainee attainment, coupled with a trend of improvement over time and the considerable reduction in withdrawals indicate an excellent record of improvement. When this is coupled to committed and ambitious leadership and management at all levels, and the strengthening of training and partnership working, an outstanding capacity to improve is demonstrated.

# Provision in the secondary phase

#### Context

21. The School of Education, University of Leicester offers a one-year full-time postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) leading to the award of qualified teacher status (QTS). The provider offers training routes in English, English with media, science, social science, mathematics, history, geography, citizenship and modern languages. At the time of the inspection there were 168 trainees on the secondary course. The provider works with 86 partner schools across five local authorities, ranging from inner city schools in Leicester to more rural schools.

#### **Key strengths**

- 22. The key strengths are:
- the excellent coherence of the entire course with very clear relationships between theory and practice
- the course documentation which is detailed and very user-friendly for trainees and training partners
- trainees good and often outstanding knowledge and use of strategies for behaviour management which fully support student achievement
- trainees' outstanding ability as highly reflective practitioners
- the use of university tutors' expertise and research to enrich the training course for trainees and partnership staff through significant practice-based research
- innovative responses to local and national issues which involve trainees in schoolbased research and creative projects in their teaching and wider school experiences.

#### Recommendations

- 22. In order to improve the capacity to improve further and so improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider should:
- ensure that all partners are fully involved in and accountable for action planning and monitoring the impact of the quality of training, measured against both quantitative and qualitative outcomes for all trainees
- enable all partners to understand their role in meeting the strategic priorities for the secondary course and how to raise the proportion of trainees graded as outstanding.
- 23. In order to improve all trainees' preparedness to teach in a diverse society the provider should:
- continue to expand the already good partnership provision so that all trainees have the chance to be immersed in teaching in contrasting school settings.

#### **Overall effectiveness**

- 24. Trainees' attainment by the end of the course is good. Over the last three years the proportion of trainees with outstanding achievement has risen and whilst attainment remains good overall, all subjects show at least a ten per cent increase in those judged as outstanding. A very large majority of trainees in the current cohort have already reached good or better attainment. The large majority of trainees make good progress and most make accelerated progress in their second school placement.
- 25. Recruitment and retention are good. Over time, completion rates remain broadly in line with the national average but there has been some recent success in increasing the number of trainees completing. This is a result of better personalisation of training, a more rapid response if issues arise, excellent welfare support for trainees, and a clear understanding from interview of the needs of trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The provider meets recruitment targets and has successfully recruited well above the national average for trainees from underrepresented groups for the past three years. A further rise to a quarter in the recruitment of minority ethnic trainees for the next cohort is testament to good marketing and positive interview experiences. Many school co-tutors sit on interview panels and the 24 minority ethnic co-tutors are good role models for prospective trainees.
- 26. Trainees possess strong interpersonal skills and establish high expectations of students. University sessions equip trainees well in understanding how to use a range of strategies to encourage good behaviour, resulting in the large majority being able to think on their feet. Trainees have good and often outstanding skills in behaviour management, which help students to focus on learning and make good progress. Trainees are highly articulate in making connections between theory and practice and the modelling of good teaching by lecturers and guest speakers gives most trainees confidence in their preliminary skills before school placements. Because they have secure subject knowledge across Key Stages 3 to 5, most trainees demonstrate a good ability to plan units of work and well structured sequences of lessons. Trainees explore creative ideas for teaching which hold students' interest. They make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to design and use resources. For example, in one school modern languages trainees working in a text book free learning environment, had designed highly creative ICT resources in their first and second languages and used these interactively with students.
- 27. In most lessons observed trainees taught with energetic pace and made excellent use of targeted questioning to include all students. In an outstanding geography lesson the trainee set up a plenary with high levels of critical debate led and managed by the students and supported by a note taker. Trainees have a good understanding of summative assessment and the majority plan learning using assessment data to differentiate learning for students in ways other than by outcome. Some lesson plans meet the needs of students with special

#### Grade: 2

educational needs and/or disabilities very well but the ability to plan learning for students of different abilities is not consistent.

- 28. Course structure and content are good. The course is a coherent programme of subject studies, a teacher development course and two school placements, with a complementary placement in a primary school. Current trainees, newly qualified trainees and co-tutors, all comment favourably on the user-friendly nature of course handbooks and how carefully leaders have aligned the sessions at university to the tasks during school placements. University tutors guide trainees in making connections between theory and practice, and trainees' work for the six professional foci is tightly linked to achievement of the QTS Standards. The teacher development course (TDC), entirely redesigned by leaders last year, is effective in enabling trainees to learn about local and national issues and try out teaching methods in micro-teaching situations. A good range of speakers from schools and external agencies are well received by trainees. Positive feedback from trainees indicates a much improved course.
- 29. Trainees show outstanding levels of critical reflection. Trainees use the teacher development record (TDR) well to capture evidence for the Standards, record weekly meetings and collate their reflections for their six tutorials. TDRs provide a sound and composite picture of trainees' progress over time and at the end of school placements. University tutors maintain good email communication with co-tutors to monitor trainees' progress but because trainees normally receive only one visit per placement, the valuable data from the TDRs is not used well enough to gain an oversight of strengths and weaknesses across the cohort between the summative assessment points.
- 30. The quality of training across the partnership is good. In some instances it is outstanding, fully supporting rapid progress, especially in the second school placement. Some feedback after lesson observation was outstanding. Co-tutors successfully engage trainees in appraising student achievement and when lesson observation feedback is good or better co-tutors refer to targets and priorities set in weekly co-tutor meetings. Most trainees receive regular and frequent clear targets for improvement. There is some inconsistency in the quality of coaching across the partnership. Most co-tutors refer to the five scale grading descriptors used by the university but only a minority characterise what constitutes outstanding learning in lessons. A few co-tutors are less secure in using descriptors for judging trainees' progress and final attainment so that the coaching of trainees over grade boundaries can stall.
- 31. University based co-tutor training days are well attended and differentiated for new and experienced co-tutors. New co-tutors and coordinators share ideas for improving areas such as the induction of trainees and how professional studies in schools can be linked to the TDC course. Transition between school placements is well led by the provider. Trainees' induction visits ensure a secure handover from the previous placement and initial teacher training co-ordinators carefully plan timetables and experiences matched to trainees' needs. However, the partnership is underdeveloped in using co-tutors and coordinators to play a rigorous role in evaluating the impact of provision across the entire partnership. There is good collegiality but limited critical review of practice across schools.

- 32. Resources are good and the deployment of human and monetary resources is mostly well matched to trainees' needs. There is outstanding pastoral care, a result of supporting trainees through additional visits to schools and regular support in the case of difficult personal circumstances. Subject sessions and the TDC course at the university are well supported by the expert knowledge of teaching teams but trainees comment that the size of some teaching rooms and lack of interactive ICT resources sometimes hamper learning. Neither the provider nor partnership formally evaluates the impact of resources on outcomes for trainees.
- 33. The large majority of trainees are well prepared to teach in a diverse society. Trainees' knowledge of working with students who speak English as an additional language, students who are bilingual learners and students from different ethnicities is often good, but a few trainees have insufficient opportunities to consolidate their skills in this aspect of their training. They do not get sufficient exposure to schools which are ethnically, socially or economically diverse and their experience of planning for different student populations is underdeveloped. Senior leaders monitor trends in final outcomes for groups of trainees by gender, age, ethnicity and disability to make certain that trainees make comparable progress. There are no significant differences in achievement between groups of trainees. The new disclosure form used at interview for trainees to declare learning difficulties and/or disabilities has helped leaders coordinate support for written assignments and for trainees with specific medical needs, so that no trainee is disadvantaged. There are appropriate systems in place to report any incidents of harassment or discrimination but the partnership steering group does not monitor the impact of policy on outcome for trainees.

### The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

#### Grade: 1

- 34. Leaders at all levels demonstrate outstanding capacity for further sustained improvement. This is evidenced by the improvement in attainment and course completion already enumerated, but also employment rates which have remained at 85% or above for the last three years. Most trainees are recruited to schools locally and course leaders are astute in monitoring the impact of trainees' employment in meeting teacher recruitment needs across the Midlands.
- 35. The School of Education is viewed by school partners as a listening institution. Leaders are open minded and very willing to accept advice. Leaders have established a shared understanding of the partnership's purpose and there is trust in partner schools to deliver good quality training. Leaders are highly reflective, evaluating all aspects of the provision and self-evaluation is largely accurate. Leaders undertake a series of quality assurance measures to monitor the quality of training at the university and during school placements. The provider captures the views of trainees, both current and former, and elicits views from across the partnership. Trainees are consulted through

questionnaires, through focus groups and through trainee representation on university committees. Headteachers, co-tutors and coordinators who oversee the trainees' placements are encouraged to share their ideas at designated training days for their roles and at the annual consultation day. The face-to-face consultation day is used very well as a forum for trainees to share their views about the quality of training with the partnership schools and the schools themselves hear what works most effectively in training across the partnership. Consultation days are well documented and help leaders determine where additional support is required to improve the quality of training. An example is the targeting of university tutor visits to work with new co-tutors in standardising judgements about trainees' progress and attainment.

- 36. The School of Education is very responsive to feedback from the external examiners and their reports usefully detail strengths and areas for development both in the taught sessions and school placements. It has successfully addressed last year's recommendations for improving the tracking of trainees' progress and sharpening the focus of the professional foci tasks in schools
- 37. The accumulation and collation of evidence from all of the quality assurance processes means that self-evaluation is well informed by different perspectives and sources of evidence, the triangulation of which is perceptive and informs quality assurance work with schools the following year. However, partnership schools are not required to undertake formal evaluations of the quality of their training nor its impact measured against the strategic priorities in the secondary improvement plan. Whilst the partnership steering group has oversight of the partnership, is insightful about the development of the course and receives quality assurance reports from leaders, the steering group does not have a central role in analysing the findings from all quality assurance activities to underpin self-evaluation grading.
- Processes for, and resulting outcomes from, self-evaluation mean that senior 38. leaders and subject leaders have a good overview of strengths and areas for development. Quality assurance reports collated by the head of the secondary course usefully outline trends in achievement by different trainee groups and summarise outcomes of feedback from stakeholders. The rich data in these reports, including oversight of progress of trainees against the Standards over three years, gives a secure basis for improvement planning at whole course level and in each subject. However, whilst leaders have made many changes to the course arising from self-evaluation, the strategic priorities and individual subject targets make little reference to quantitative success criteria in relation to improving outcomes for all trainees. The key improvement priorities are shared with partnership schools but the dissemination and understanding of outcomes from the quality assurance processes and self-evaluation which determines these priorities are less well understood by partnership staff. Not all partnership schools are fully conversant with how the provider is trying to raise attainment. Leaders at the university track the impact of the action plans through regular PGCE team meetings and progress board meetings but outcomes from these meetings are not shared widely enough across the partnership.

- 39. A vision of innovation and creativity and firmly establishing practice-based research are central features of the School of Education's work with trainees and school staff, and ensures that the provider's anticipation of change and responsiveness to national and local initiatives is outstanding. The wide range of innovative projects across subject areas enables trainees and school staff to explore new approaches to learning and share best practice as a group of researchers. The blogging and on-line resources in citizenship, history and geography, the imaginative use of ICT resources in modern languages and English with media, twilight sessions for science trainees at the Science Learning Centre and projects such as social scientists mentoring A-level students, provide invaluable experiences in helping trainees use research projects to inform their work as teachers.
- 40. Senior leaders are responsive to changes taking place across the partnership, examining how government legislation will impact upon training. As a result trainees are articulate about most national and local issues in their subject and in education, although a few are less skilful in integrating literacy issues across the curriculum. In responding to local and national educational agendas the partnership steering group is carefully guiding the remodelling of aspects of the secondary PGCE course to better meet the needs of local schools. Ideas for clustering schools to extend professional development and quality assurance within and across partner schools are emerging. The prominence of, and commitment to, establishing an empirically focused research community with trainees and schools is evident in the increasing number enrolling for the masters in learning and teaching course, enhancing the professional development of partnership staff.

# Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

#### **Overall effectiveness**

		Primary	Secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2	2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	2	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	2	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	1	2

#### Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

	Primary	Secondary
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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