

# Essex Primary Schools Training Group

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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**Provider address**

ITT Team  
Harlow Centre  
Partridge Road  
Harlow  
CM18 6TE

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Chris Nye HMI

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## Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a specialist inspector 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. Essex Primary Schools Training Group SCITT offers a postgraduate initial teacher education course which leads to the award of qualified teacher status in primary education (5-11). Trainees complete a one year full time programme which includes central training and placements in two different schools. The SCITT, which is located in Essex local authority's professional centre, works in partnership with approximately 34 primary, infant and junior schools within the local authority. At the time of the inspection there were 27 trainees on the course. The SCITT has very close links with the local authority and complements other initial teacher training provision within the authority.

## Provision in the primary phase

### Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
  - the outstanding management which is driving improvement and involving all partners in shaping, reviewing and evaluating the training
  - the enthusiastic and successful trainees who are committed to their own professional development because of their willingness to listen and respond to advice
  - the excellent quality of the taught course which generates a strong cohesion between theory and practice
  - the rigorous and detailed assessment systems which ensure that judgements are consistently accurate and that targets very well focused on trainees' needs
  - the very high quality of resources which are effectively supporting the training
  - the excellent communications across the partnership which results in a common understanding of how the provision needs to improve.

### Recommendations

5. In order to improve the provision and quality of training to raise trainees' attainment, the provider should:
  - ensure that trainees gain more confidence and experience in teaching pupils with English as an additional language
  - ensure that the support and training provided by school-based mentors is consistently as good as in the provider's best practice
  - ensure that trainees have a greater awareness of inclusion issues in their teaching.
6. In order to improve the provider's capacity to improve, the provider should:
  - strengthen improvement planning by ensuring that success criteria are consistently measureable against outcomes for trainees.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 2**

7. The overall effectiveness of the provider is good because the training, assessment and provision across the partnership are of good quality. Recently, a number of improvements have been made to the training although it is too soon to judge their impact. Over the last three years a very large majority of trainees have achieved levels of performance which are good or better and less than ten percent have only attained satisfactory standards. The proportion of trainees achieving outstanding levels of performance has varied. However the numbers of

these increased in last year's cohort and very detailed and accurate assessment data, confirmed by inspection evidence, suggests that the current cohort is achieving at an even higher level.

8. Systems to recruit and select suitable trainees are good. The provider has recognised that although the previous system short-listed potentially suitable candidates for interview, the interview process itself needed to be more rigorous. Consequently, changes have been made in the interview day for the 2011-2012 cohort with the aim of strengthening the system. For example, candidates are now observed in classes in school; this has the advantage of involving mentors and partnership school staff more in the selection process and provides better opportunities to judge more accurately how well candidates relate to pupils. Interviewers are well-prepared and clear criteria for each of the selection activities helps to ensure fairness and consistency. Successful candidates are provided with suitable pre-course reading and an induction process ensures that they are fully prepared for the training.
9. The provider has been very successful in recruiting suitable male applicants, a group under-represented in the primary work force. It has been less successful in recruiting from minority ethnic communities, but well-conceived plans are in place to improve this. The very few instances where a trainee has withdrawn from the course have been due to unforeseeable circumstances and the provider has done all it can to provide support in such circumstances. Employment rates are exceptionally high. For example, all of last year's trainees gained teaching posts, with most being appointed to Essex schools. Because of the provider's close association with the local authority, it has been possible to track the progress of these trainees during their first year of teaching. The authority has judged all to be performing at a level that is at least good.
10. Training is good overall, although a number of recent improvements have the potential to improve this still further when they become fully embedded. Carefully structured training, which provides particularly good cohesion between theory and practice, enables trainees to make good progress and this is evidenced by clear and accurate tracking data. Central training is very effective, particularly in professional studies and in how to teach the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Training in phonics and early reading has been strengthened and plans are in place to develop this further next year. As a result, trainees demonstrate increasing confidence in their understanding of teaching early reading and writing. Very well qualified and experienced tutors model good primary practice and the use of partnership schools with particular expertise in such areas as phonics, physical education and special educational needs to support the taught course is a strength. Cohesion between theory and practice is further enhanced by a developmental series of school-based tasks, relevant assignments and the close monitoring of trainees' teaching by core subject tutors and key mentors, who are highly responsive to their individual needs. For example, additional training sessions in information and communication technology were offered when it became evident that some trainees lacked confidence in using interactive whiteboards. Training in how to manage pupils' behaviour is good overall, although a few trainees are aware that they need to improve their confidence in this area. They have a good

understanding of how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

11. Trainees are very committed to their own professional development and willingly take responsibility for this. They consistently listen to and act upon advice and this is illustrated by their detailed reflective diaries and the well-organised records of evidence that they keep to show their progress towards meeting the Standards. They show strengths in planning exciting learning activities and in using a wide range of resources to support pupils' learning. Many are highly imaginative in planning their teaching so that it allows pupils to learn through discovery. For example, in a science lesson one trainee used a range of musical instruments to allow pupils to explore, discover and record the properties of sound. However, although central training in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language is of good quality, many lack confidence in this area because there have been limited opportunities to experience this first hand.
12. Schools provide good training venues. School-based training is well planned and many mentors provide outstanding support to trainees. However, there are a few instances where the recording of such training and support has been too informal, as for example when records of weekly meetings have not been completed in sufficient detail. Nevertheless the overall assessment of trainees' progress towards achieving the Standards is accurate and ensures that trainees have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Feedback following the observation of trainees' teaching is consistently good or better and comments are detailed, helpful and link well to the Standards. End of term reports clearly indicate which Standards have been met and good continuity between placements ensures that targets are rigorously followed up in the subsequent placement. Final assessments are supported by detailed evidence files and provide accurate and very well-moderated judgements of trainees' progress and attainment.
13. The provider is very well resourced and applies rigorous and well-balanced systems to ensure that such resources are used extremely well to support the best possible outcomes for trainees. Administrative systems are highly efficient and human resources are a strength, particularly with regard to the taught course. The allocation of funds across the partnership is fair, transparent and highly responsive to need. Trainees are each provided with a carefully planned package of essential equipment including books, digital cameras and microscopes, software and a laptop computer. They also have access to a small, but up-to-date and well-organised central library and resource base.
14. Improving trends in achievement and attainment signify that provision across the partnership is a growing strength. Staff at the centre and in partnership schools demonstrate high levels of commitment to improving the quality of the provision. Communications are excellent, ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Training for mentors effectively prepares them to support and assess trainees, although a few inconsistencies remain, for example in ensuring high quality record keeping. Proformas have recently been simplified and written guidance, including the course handbook, is in the process of being up-dated to reflect recent and

planned improvements. The key mentor role has been strengthened and expanded to provide more training, monitoring and support to mentors, and this is starting to have a very positive impact on the quality of the provision and outcomes for trainees.

15. The provider effectively promotes equality of opportunity and values diversity. Trainees feel well supported and their individual needs are accurately identified and met, although the provider is in the process of improving subject audits to strengthen this still further. There have been no incidents of harassment or unlawful discrimination. Policies on equality and diversity meet government requirements, although they do not clearly indicate when they are to be reviewed. Central training in inclusion is effective, although opportunities are missed to strengthen trainees' awareness and experience of inclusion issues in their teaching by encouraging them to identify in their planning what the issues are in their lessons and how they will address them.

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

**Grade: 2**

16. The provider's capacity to improve is good overall, but the effectiveness of the management is outstanding in ensuring a proportionate and secure response to the need for change and development. Since her appointment, the highly effective course manager has swiftly and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and has introduced changes which are starting to drive improvement. Trainers and managers at all levels rapidly respond not only to short term issues identified by trainees, but also to longer term areas for development. For example, analysis of evaluations showed that trainees in 2009-2010 were less confident in teaching phonics and this has led to a number of changes in the current year and a corresponding increase in trainees' confidence in this area.
17. Systems to quality assure the training and provision are very robust, involve all partners and there is emerging evidence of success, especially with regard to the impact on trainees' achievement. Trainees are frequently observed by mentors, key mentors, headteachers and tutors and many of these are joint observations, thus ensuring consistency of assessment across the partnership. The views of trainers and trainees are actively sought regarding all aspects of the training. Their evaluations are scrupulously analysed and the results taken into full account when planning changes either immediately, such as providing additional training for the current cohort, or in the longer term through the improvement planning process. External examiners' reports are detailed with clear recommendations to which there is always a prompt response. For example a recommendation to strengthen systems to support trainees who are in danger of failing has resulted in a more robust process.
18. The management and steering groups are knowledgeable, very well organised and provide effective challenge and support to the course leader. Trainees and

all partnership schools are represented and working relationships across the partnership are excellent. Both of these groups have a very clear understanding of their roles and the provider's strengths and areas for development. Regular and in-depth reviews are fed into the improvement planning process and are having a positive impact on improving the quality of the provision.

19. Leadership at all levels is proactive in anticipating and responding to change and the impact of this is starting to be reflected in trainees' achievement. Good quality training in the national priorities is helping to support trainees' understanding, especially in phonics and early reading, as well as helping schools keep up-to-date in their understanding of these areas. Trainees are encouraged to share their developing expertise with schools to support innovation. For example, two trainees have planned a presentation to partnership headteachers on how visualisers can support teaching and learning. The provider is also very effective in supporting teacher recruitment in Essex and effectively contributes to the local authority educational provision, especially with regard to sharing training expertise with other initial teacher training partnerships within the local authority.
20. Strategic planning is very well informed by the analysis of a wide range of evaluations and careful consideration of local and national priorities. The structure and timing of the improvement planning process is logical with subject action plans, a maintenance plan and a longer term improvement plan meshing well to ensure an on-going and effective drive for improvement. The plans identify suitable actions, personnel, costs and time-scales. Success criteria are identified but not all, notably those concerned with subject development, are clearly measurable against outcomes.



## 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
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>2</b>
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	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
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2

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

	Primary
<b>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?</b>	<b>2</b>
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?	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?	2

<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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