

Ninestiles Initial Teacher Training Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 21–24 January 2013

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors, in accordance with the Handbook for inspecting initial teacher education from September 2012.

The inspection draws upon evidence from within the ITE partnership to make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

	Employment-based routes
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	2
The outcomes for trainees	2
The quality of training across the partnership	2
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	2

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The employment-based route

Information about the employment-based partnership

1. The Ninestiles ITT Consortium provides employment-based initial teacher training (ITT) for graduates. The consortium consists of a partnership of 19 secondary schools located in the Birmingham area.
2. The lead school of the current consortium is Ninestiles School: An Academy and Teaching School. Several schools are new to the partnership this year. A few previous partners have left the partnership to run their own school-led teacher training. From September 2013 the Ninestiles partnership is being reshaped around the Ninestiles Teaching Schools Alliance. This consists of the same lead school and an additional seven local schools, some of whom are current partners, and the University of Warwick. The Alliance has successfully applied to the Teaching Agency to change its status to become an accredited provider of school-centred initial teacher training from 2013-14.
3. At the time of the inspection, 18 trainees were following a full-time programme. Training covers the 11-16 age-range and is offered currently in mathematics, science, modern languages, English, geography, history and design technology.

Information about the employment-based ITE inspection

4. The inspection team consisted of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). They observed lessons taught by five newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and eight trainees in five of the partnership schools. Four of these observations were undertaken jointly with school staff.
5. Inspectors held meetings with individual and groups of trainees and newly qualified teachers. They also met with mentors, headteachers and senior mentors in partnership schools. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the partnership's self-evaluation; improvement planning; internal and external data on trainees; trainees' and former trainees' electronic portfolios and mentors' training records.

Inspection Team

Peter Gale HMI	Lead Inspector
Susan Wareing HMI	Assistant Lead Inspector
Robert Barbour HMI	Shadow Inspector

Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the employment-based partnership are:

- the consistently good and better outcomes enjoyed by trainees who quickly go on to hold positions of responsibility in schools within and beyond the partnership
- the high quality central-and school-based behaviour management training that results in trainees and NQTs showing confidence in managing their classes
- the consistently effective approaches NQTs and trainees use to develop pupils' literacy through their subject teaching
- trainees' and NQTs' well-developed ability to teach pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs due to high quality central- and school-based training which is augmented by special school placements
- the highly committed leadership that has developed excellent systems of communication, comprehensive documentation and close working relationships which help the partnership to respond rapidly to trainees' emerging needs
- the extensive use of highly regarded school-based trainers to deliver high quality central training for the benefit of trainees.

What does the employment-based partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- ensure all school-based trainers consistently match the excellent practice in lesson observation feedback and coaching seen by inspectors
- focus support more proactively to ensure that all trainees, including those training in mathematics and science, have outstanding outcomes by the end of their training
- further enhance school-based training to promote trainees' understanding of pupils' mathematical development and develop their confidence to tackle homophobic bullying.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good

6. Completion and employment rates have, over time, been consistently above the sector average. All trainees completing in 2012 were employed and correctly assessed as having attainment at a good or outstanding level. The attainment of trainees in mathematics and science is, however, at a relatively lower level than for trainees in other subjects. This is usually, but not exclusively, related to them not closely matching work to individual pupils' needs, particularly for the most able, and/or not consistently using the most effective questioning techniques to incisively assess pupils' progress. The partnership's thorough analysis of trainees' starting points shows that trainees in English and the foundation subjects have higher starting points overall than those in mathematics and science. Weaker school-based training than is the norm for the partnership has occurred in a few of the newer partner schools this year. This has resulted in a small number of trainees making slower progress in developing their teaching than their peers.
7. The partnership enjoys a good reputation across the local area and many trainees go on to teach in partnership schools. Over time these teachers have added significant value to their schools and to the progress their pupils make. Former trainees have often been quickly promoted; many are in positions of significant responsibility across the partnership. All NQTs inspectors observed were delivering good and better teaching and learning regularly in their schools.
8. Most trainees and all NQTs observed by inspectors demonstrate well developed personal skills that encourage good, and often very good, levels of participation by students in well-designed tasks and activities. Trainees contribute well to the wider life of the school, for example by participating in school open and parents' evenings, as well as visits and clubs for pupils. This helps them to be seen as members of staff from the outset by their pupils. Combined with trainees' good interpersonal skills, this usually fosters positive working relationships. Trainees and NQTs demonstrate well-developed knowledge of their subjects and most use appropriate approaches and strategies for teaching them. Those trainees and NQTs reaching the highest levels of attainment consistently demonstrate high quality lesson planning. This is detailed, well-structured with clear objectives, and contains good examples of creative and exciting tasks and activities that give pupils confidence to take risks with their learning and promotes their independence. However, trainees and NQTs do not always have a wide enough range of strategies to tailor work precisely to the learning needs of all their pupils, especially the more able.

9. Trainees' questioning techniques are developed well by school-based trainers over time. Most trainees use them to make frequent checks on pupils' understanding and already show the ability to adapt their teaching in the light of feedback from pupils about their learning. Lower attaining trainees sometimes fail to direct their questions to all pupils. This allows some pupils to remain passive in their learning. At this relatively early stage of their training most trainees demonstrate a developing ability to give effective written feedback to their students and to set simple targets for their next steps in their learning. NQTs and some of the highest attaining trainees have a good knowledge of National Curriculum levels and how to apply them. They establish a good dialogue with students about how to improve their work.
10. Behaviour management and literacy training are very strong in the partnership. Most trainees and all NQTs show considerable skill in managing the behaviour of pupils and applying school systems. All trainees and NQTs plan for literacy development through their teaching. Most are good at planning and delivering high quality activities that help pupils' develop their reading, writing and communication skills. Trainees receive central training on all types of bullying. This ensures that they are aware of bullying as an issue. However, trainees and NQTs demonstrated a more consistent understanding of how to tackle cyber bullying than of homophobic bullying. This is sometimes related to the higher profile given by the schools they train in to some aspects of bullying rather than others.
11. Trainees have good opportunities to work with students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds in their schools. As a result they demonstrate a good understanding of working in diverse contexts. Trainees plan very well for those pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. NQTs, particularly, demonstrate skill in working with learning support staff to promote good progress in lessons.
12. Trainees all receive training in how to develop mathematical skills through their subject teaching. However, while all partner schools give a high profile to developing pupils' literacy and expectations are high, this is less consistent for developing mathematical skills. This means that trainees do not consolidate pupils' mathematical skills on a regular basis and occasionally miss opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical skills through their subject teaching.

The quality of training across the partnership is good

13. Central training through professional studies programmes is of high quality and very strongly evaluated by trainees and NQTs. The school-based follow-up to such training is rigorous and led by professional and subject mentors. Judicious use is made of school-based experts from

within the partnership including Advanced Skills Teachers and Specialist Leaders of Education. They help trainees and NQTs to apply what they have learned to their specific school and subject context. Literacy training is well embedded, with high quality training materials produced by the partnership to support it. Combined with the high priority given to literacy development in placement schools, this leads to very good practice in trainees' and NQTs' teaching.

14. Behaviour management is the aspect of central training most highly rated by trainees and NQTs. This high-quality training and good use of school behaviour management systems leads to very good behaviour management by trainees and NQTs and good relationships with pupils. Anti-bullying training within the central programme gives trainees and NQTs high levels of awareness of types of bullying.
15. Contrasting placements in mostly high-performing schools with ethnically, culturally, socially, economically diverse contexts promote trainees' good skills in teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language, those who are entitled to free school meals or are of a minority ethnic background. High quality central training in teaching disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is augmented by school-based work and an additional placement at a special school. Most trainees value the high quality individual support and challenge they receive from the central staff and school mentors, who are very well respected for their expertise, wide educational experience and approachability. Most mentors give well in excess of the time allotted to these activities. They visibly enjoy their role and are committed to helping trainees to improve their practice.
16. The quality of mentoring in schools varies from a few instances where it requires improvement to many examples of outstanding practice. Excellent practice was identified in all of the long term partner schools and some of those which are new to the partnership. Where mentors' practice required improvement it was in a small number of lead schools engaging with the partnership for the first time. Trainees usually receive feedback from many lesson observations and in weekly meetings. Most trainees receive their weekly entitlement to meetings with their mentors and to regular formal lesson observations. However, in a few cases meetings are cut short and formal lesson feedback is not produced in a timely way. In these cases the quality of feedback and target setting for improvement is therefore less consistently strong. Most mentors very effectively coach trainees to understand their strengths and targets for improvement by linking them directly to the Teachers' Standards and pupils' progress. Most mentors and trainees find the electronic portfolio very helpful for tracking trainees' progress and understand what constitutes good evidence to meet the Teachers' Standards.

17. The assessment of trainees' progress by central staff and most mentors is accurate and clearly based on the Teachers' Standards. Trainees' understand exactly what they need to do in order to improve. Some partner schools work with more than one provider, this causes an occasional lack of coherence between the school-based and central training received in some schools.
18. The quality of science training is good and compensates well for trainees' weaker starting points. The proportions attaining at a good or better level have risen since the last inspection. Trainees' own subject knowledge is good and they keenly engage in additional study to upgrade any areas they are less confident in teaching. The partnership funds extra external subject study for those trainees who require this during the course. This boosts further the good quality subject sessions put on by the partnership subject coordinators. Subject booster courses are also used effectively following selection to the training ensure that all trainees are ready to start the course. Subject leaders in all subjects the partnership offers carry out termly joint observations with subject mentors in schools to accurately assess trainees' progress and science is no exception. The culmination of good science training was seen when a science NQT was observed. She demonstrated good subject understanding of contraception and strengths in planning a variety of thoughtful activities that enhanced Year 7 pupils' understanding of the subject. It was to her credit and because of the relationships she had formed that pupils' engaged thoughtfully and sensibly with the subject material.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is good

19. Partnership leaders have sustained and improved the previously good outcomes from the previous inspection. Thorough quality assurance, by the partnership lead and her subject leaders, who undertake regular visits to partner schools, results in the partnership leadership having a very well developed understanding of the quality of provision. The partnership leadership has worked hard with new partners to improve provision where necessary but has found it more difficult to secure commitment where partners are only committed to them for one year. Current trainees completing the inspection questionnaire showed high satisfaction rates with the quality of training and support provided by the partnership. Inspection questionnaires show similar satisfaction levels to those completed by trainees at the end of their training which are intelligently used by the partnership to improve provision.
20. Improvement planning is good and has secured improvement in provision and outcomes over time. Previous improvement plans have focused securely on improving outcomes for trainees and the cohort

completing in 2012 all had good or outstanding outcomes. The current improvement plan, while focusing partially on subject knowledge development, is largely devoted to the migration of the current programme to school-centred initial teacher training and School Direct provision. Leaders at Ninestiles have worked hard to recruit new schools into the partnership for 2012-13. Some of these new schools are developing a long-term commitment to a re-shaped good quality training partnership.

21. Recruitment and selection processes are robust and secure a good understanding of trainees' starting points. The provision of pre-course tasks, including a three-day introduction, school visits and relevant directed reading, as well as prompt contact from the centre and the receiving school, all help trainees to make a confident start to their teaching. The judgements made at the beginning of the course have proved to be accurate predictors of future outcomes for trainees over time. They are not yet used proactively to boost trainees' attainment to the maximum, for example, by putting in more support where trainees are identified as potentially lower attaining or by using this information to stretch the most able trainees from the beginning of the course. However, the very good communication across the partnership and the ability of the partnership leader to respond rapidly means that extra support is quickly provided where it is needed.
22. Systems for monitoring and evaluating trainees' progress are effective, with regular joint lesson observations by the partnership leadership and subject leaders as well as the professional mentor. Students find the individual training plans and subject development record a very useful support to their evaluation of their own progress. The partnership leader checks weekly evaluations assiduously and the newly-developed e-portfolio is an effective aid to monitoring. The portfolio is used diligently by some mentors and trainees but it takes others some time to get used to the routine of uploading and checking this online.
23. The partnership has tackled all areas for development from the previous inspection report. In those partner schools with the highest commitment to the partnership the areas for development are now strengths. This demonstrates good capacity to improve further. However, the quality of feedback and target setting in a few of the new partner schools has fallen back a little from the high quality consistently described by NQTs. The re-shaping of the partnership for 2013-14, to fewer core partners who are all currently providing excellent training and support, has the potential to address the partnership's current problems with consistency. Trainees and professional and subject mentors find that information from and communication with the centre is comprehensive and helpful. This includes good quality documentation and the generally helpful procedures.

24. School-based trainers are confident that swift support is provided by the centre in the event of any problems during placements. They feel able to contact the centre staff at any time and mentors can point to their individual suggestions and comments being adopted by the partnership. Some Professional Mentors have opportunities to attend meetings regularly and share practice outside their school, for example as members of the Partnership Steering Group. Where attendance at meetings is variable, the partnership leader and her team are energetic in their personal contact with subject and professional mentors to provide effective support and challenge.
25. Currently there is no subject level planning but the partnership has plans to introduce this as it moves to having more trainees in fewer subjects in the near future. Subject leaders demonstrate a passion for teacher training and high levels of commitment. Subject sessions are highly evaluated by trainees and school-based mentors find visits very useful in moderating their judgements. Some subject leaders are better linked to external sources of subject specific interest and resource than others. For example, some have useful links with subject associations while others do not.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Ninestiles School, An Academy, Birmingham
Archbishop Ilsley School, Birmingham
Perry Beeches, The Academy, Birmingham
St Peter's Catholic School Specialist Science College, Solihull
Whitley Abbey Academy, Coventry

ITE partnership details

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