

Two Mile Ash ITT Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates: 18–21 March 2013

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and a seconded inspector in accordance with the *Handbook for inspecting initial teacher education from September 2012*.

The inspection draws upon evidence 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 Primary QTS
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	1
The outcomes for trainees	1
The quality of training across the partnership	1
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	1

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The employment-based initial teacher training primary route

Information about the partnership

1. The Two Mile Ash Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Partnership offers a Graduate Training Programme (GTP) for primary education in Milton Keynes. The lead school works with 11 partner schools and eight associate schools. It prepares trainees to teach pupils in the 5–11 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 27 trainees, of whom eight were men. Two of the trainees are self-funded.
2. Ten of the partnership schools are in Milton Keynes and one is in Northamptonshire. Of the two schools supporting self-funded trainees, one is further afield in South Buckinghamshire. The partnership requires partner schools to have been judged as good or outstanding in their previous section 5 school inspection.
3. Since the partnership started training teachers 11 years ago, over 150 of their teachers have been recruited into the expanding Milton Keynes primary sector.
4. Two Mile Ash school is a designated teaching school which, as well as Initial Teacher Training, provides a range of professional development programmes for prospective teachers, existing teachers and leaders in education. The provider also works in collaboration with the local authority to provide support for underperforming schools.
5. The partnership is doubling in size as it transforms into a school-centred initial teacher training provider (SCITT) from September 2013, preparing trainees to teach in the Early Years Foundation stage and the 5–11 age range. The SCITT will work in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University.

Information about the inspection

6. Inspectors observed eight lessons taught by trainees in four schools. All of these were observed jointly with the school-based trainer (SBT) or a quality assurance team member from the partnership. Inspectors also observed three lessons taught by newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in their first year of teaching, in two schools.
7. In addition, inspectors observed trainers giving feedback to trainees and scrutinised trainers' lesson observation records and reports, trainees' teaching files, evidence for the Teachers' Standards, and documents relating to trainees' professional and subject knowledge enhancement.

8. Inspectors held discussions with: trainees, NQTs and recently qualified teachers in their second year of teaching in partnership schools; trainers, leaders and managers; and headteachers and members of the partnership's quality assurance team. They observed centre-based training sessions in information and communication technology (ICT), and an 'arts day', comprising master classes in music, drama and art. Inspectors also observed a training and moderation meeting with school-based trainers.
9. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including information relating to recruitment and selection; documents on statutory safeguarding and compliance with the initial teacher training criteria; assessments and analyses of outcomes for trainees; evaluations and improvement plans; external moderator reports; and information for trainees on the partnership's website. Inspectors also reviewed the trends in the attainment of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 in partnership schools and Milton Keynes.
10. Inspectors scrutinised centrally held monitoring reports from quality assurance visits, external assessor reports and evaluations from trainees, former trainees and mentors.
11. Inspectors also took account of the responses to the trainee online questionnaire, which almost all trainees completed. They also took account of the Teaching Agency's NQT survey and evaluations from schools, trainees and headteachers on the quality of provision.

Inspection team

Sheena MacDonald HMI: lead inspector

Steven Popper, seconded additional inspector: assistant lead inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the partnership are:

- Outstanding leadership and management, which ensure that the vision for excellence is realised, shared within the leadership team and permeates all aspects of the partnership.
- The high quality of trainees, who demonstrate very high aspirations, develop quickly into good and outstanding teachers, often move on to leadership roles and who make a significant contribution to improving pupils' attainment in the local area.

- Outstanding recruitment procedures which lead to the selection of potentially good and outstanding trainees, an exceptionally high number of whom gain and remain in employment in local schools.
- Outstanding use of the considerable expertise in partnership schools which provides trainees and NQTs with consistently high-quality training, for the whole group and at individual level.
- The exceptionally sharp focus on what makes teaching and learning outstanding which pervades all parts of the course, and ensures that trainees have the ability to demonstrate those attributes.

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

The partnership should:

- Maintain the consistently high quality of the provision as the partnership expands and becomes a school-centred initial teacher training provider.

Inspection judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding

12. Schools speak very highly of the quality of Two Mile Ash trainees and, as one headteacher said, 'there is hot competition to employ them' during their training and when they complete the course. School leaders are confident that the trainees they employ hit the ground running, demonstrate very high aspirations and develop quickly into good and outstanding teachers with clear leadership potential. This confidence is underlined by the many recently qualified teachers who have achieved specialist teacher status, taken up leadership roles, and who have become school-based trainers themselves. Recently qualified teachers from the partnership are currently helping to support underperforming schools in the local area. Although withdrawals are rare, improvements to the exceptionally rigorous selection process, allied to amendments to the early part of the course, have resulted in no withdrawals from the course this year.
13. Almost all trainees gain employment and nearly all are still teaching after three years. Employment and retention rates are exceptionally high when compared with the national figures. Most NQTs are recruited to Milton Keynes schools and make a significant contribution to improving pupils' attainment. The attainment of pupils in the partnership schools is

generally well above average and attainment is rising in many local schools.

14. Trainees' skills in reflecting on their work and the quality of their lesson planning were identified as strengths at the previous inspection and have improved further because of a much sharper focus on pupils' learning. Trainees are well aware that their effectiveness is measured by their ability to ensure that all pupils make good progress in their lessons. The main focus of all discussions following lessons is to evaluate, at an increasingly deep level, the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. In their teaching, and in discussions, trainees and recently qualified teachers show an impressive knowledge of individual pupils and an understanding of how to adapt the learning to meet different needs and abilities.
15. Trainees and NQTs demonstrate a very good understanding of, and ability to use, assessment information and pupils' levels of attainment to address gaps and build new learning. They provide lively and engaging opportunities for pupils to share and express their ideas and extend their learning. They manage behaviour very confidently and ensure that pupils not only behave well but also develop positive attitudes to learning. In part, trainees' and NQTs' obvious confidence in modelling learning strategies and their ability to amend the learning in lessons to better meet the needs of the pupils are a result of their strong subject knowledge. Subject knowledge audits show that, because of high-quality training, all trainees have increased their subject knowledge in mathematics, English and science since the beginning of the course. Most of these increases are substantial.
16. The drive for excellence has resulted in close attention throughout the course to those elements of teaching which produce outstanding learning. Trainers and schools model excellent practice and raise trainees' awareness, aspirations and ability to emulate this. As a result, there has been a significant and sustained increase in the number of trainees who achieve outstanding grades by the end of the course. The current cohort is on track for further improvements. In the rare incidence of trainees not meeting the provider's exceptionally high standards for good or outstanding teaching, there is very good evidence to show that these trainees go on to become good and outstanding teachers at an early stage in their careers.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding

17. The outstanding quality of the training is confirmed in exceptionally positive and improving results to the Teaching Agency's NQT surveys over the last three years. These overwhelmingly positive views are

confirmed in the most recent survey of current trainees. School leaders, trainees and recently qualified teachers are all extremely complimentary about the quality and usefulness of the training, both core and school-based, and NQTs said they still refer to it in their current work as teachers and leaders. This is because of its focus on the quality of pupils' learning and progress, the effective mix of theory and practice, the relevance and thoroughness of its content and the way that the training is responsive to trainees' needs. Every training session is followed up, step by step, in practice and is enhanced by trainees' involvement in their host school's professional development activities, as well as their highly individualised training programme.

18. Programme leaders, school-based trainers and quality assurance team members provide individual support, matching trainees to schools and school-based trainers very carefully. Partner schools provide at least good quality training environments, excellent role models and high expectations, and project a drive for excellence. Whole-group training is run by subject-specific experts and located in schools with particular strengths. All training seen during the inspection was outstanding. This is because it is delivered by teachers who model excellent practice and promote substantial reflection on learning and who address the development of trainees' subject knowledge systematically. For example, specialist teachers provided a series of master classes with pupils in music, drama and art. This provided trainees with the opportunity to observe and analyse the impact on pupils' achievements of expert teaching in a superb setting with excellent resources. The following day, trainees talked about how they planned to use what they had learned in their own teaching.
19. The actions taken since the previous inspection mean that trainees' good subject knowledge and their ability to use this in their teaching are now strengths. Trainees' ability to teach literacy, including early reading, mathematics and science, are already good and improving rapidly. Trainees are confident in their ability to teach phonics and early reading, and this is borne out by lesson observations and the very specific subject-specific feedback they receive from trainers. The training also ensures that inclusion, diversity and providing challenge for more able pupils, as well as support for pupils with special educational needs, are aspects which are threaded throughout the course. As a result, trainees and NQTs demonstrate confidence in these aspects in the lessons that they teach, and in their responses to the trainee survey carried out during the inspection.
20. There has been particularly strong improvement and impact in mathematics. Rigorous training, auditing and tracking of trainees' mathematical knowledge and ability to teach mean that all trainees have improved their mathematical subject knowledge, including those whose subject knowledge was very good to begin with. The training models

excellent practice, with a strong focus on how children learn. The positive impact of this was seen in the observations of both trainees and NQTs during the inspection. A key feature of mathematics training is its emphasis on the promotion of pupils' mathematical thinking skills, learning and progress. All mathematics lessons seen were well structured and contained good opportunities for problem solving and discussion. The lessons contained very good use of subject knowledge to model mathematical thinking and to deepen understanding. Trainees' analysis, during the lesson feedback that followed, demonstrated knowledge of pupils' attainment and progress in using and applying mathematics.

21. Trainees and NQTs comment on the valuable opportunities they have to experience different schools and settings and varied teaching styles. They are encouraged to develop their own style and approach by being able to compare, contrast and make decisions about what works well and why. The cross-phase placements (a six-week placement at a different school, teaching a different age group) are carefully chosen to extend the variety of social and cultural contexts, size and ethos of schools as well as the age range of pupils. The high-quality cross-phase assessment profiles demonstrate the importance of this part of the training, and were seen being used as part of school-based mentor training to build on, set targets and plan the next phase of the training. The trainees' own evaluations show an unusual depth of analysis and personal understanding, and therefore the personal targets they set for themselves are precise and provide an impetus to reach the next level of achievement.
22. The feedback given to trainees on their lessons is of consistently high quality, detailed and effective in highlighting strengths and next steps. The same is true of school-based training in general. School-based trainers promote very high expectations and have a sharp focus on the impact of the trainees' teaching on pupils' progress and learning. Targets and next steps are clearly and accurately identified and progress against these is carefully monitored. Trainees are fully engaged in the process of their improvement and in evaluating how their teaching impacts on pupils' achievement. Trainers are thoughtful and sensitive but do not shy away from hard messages when necessary. These aspirations and high expectations were seen in an excellent school-based training session where trainers made realistic but aspirational evaluations of where trainees are now and where they should, or could be, by the end of the training programme. They then discussed what they needed to do to enable trainees to make sufficient progress to realise their potential. Even though most trainees are already demonstrating good qualities, and some have already been appointed to teaching positions, there was no suggestion of complacency. Trainees and trainers are gathering themselves for a real push!

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding

23. The strategic overview and vision for excellence is shared within the leadership team and across the partnership. At its heart is a determination to produce outstanding teachers for local schools. The provider is achieving this and well over 90% of trainees gain employment and remain in local schools. Several aspects of leadership, management and quality assurance were judged to be strengths at the last inspection. There has been no resting on laurels and all aspects have improved further. The impact of this drive is evident in improving outcomes for trainees, schools and pupils.
24. Partnership schools are scrutinised for effectiveness and expertise. One Principal said that the partnership is 'very fussy' about which schools are invited. Partner schools are required to be at least good, and about half were judged to be outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection. The ITT leader also checks carefully to make sure that schools are able to provide excellent school-based training and support. The provider knows its schools very well, including the individual school-based trainers and the schools' areas of expertise. This means that trainees and schools are well matched and core training takes place in various schools where most expertise is available. The provider enables trainees to gain valuable experience of other schools and settings, such as secondary and special schools, museums and forest schools.
25. Representatives of the quality and monitoring team are recruited from a variety of schools, including the associate special school. This group is knowledgeable and cohesive. Its members articulate a strong sense of vision and purpose and share a clear understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding practice. Systems for monitoring and quality assurance are regular and rigorous and, as well as ensuring accurate assessment, also support school-based trainer development. The valuable information they gather about trainees' teaching and about school-based training is fed into very rigorous and challenging self-evaluation, monitoring and review systems. All school-based trainers are quality assured and have to attend regular training and moderation events. They jointly observe trainees in cross-phase placements. There is strong evidence that this group is influential in ensuring continuing improvement, as seen in the increase in outstanding trainees, in their recruitment to schools in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area, and in their ongoing good progress.
26. In surveys, all trainees strongly agree that recruitment and selection are rigorous. In discussion, trainees and NQTs said that they believe that

the selection process helped them to demonstrate the skills and attributes necessary to become a good or better teacher. Prior to application, potential trainees are supported through a well-planned primary experience programme. The selection process is in three stages, each one of which involves a range of group and individual activities designed to evaluate the potential and suitability of candidates. These procedures benefit from the involvement of many partnership school staff. They take place in several schools and involve teaching activities as well as discussions, interviews and tests. They have been improved in the light of previous experience to evaluate the resilience of candidates to better assess their ability to cope with the challenges of the course. As a result of these changes and improvements to the course, no trainees have withdrawn this year. The trainees' potential assessed at selection is accurate and nearly all trainees assessed as potentially outstanding achieve this outcome.

27. Self-evaluation and improvement planning are very effective. Priorities arise from careful evaluation of evidence from a wide variety of sources, including intensive monitoring and detailed analyses of how well trainees are teaching and pupils are learning. The positive impact of improvement planning and the success of actions taken can be seen in the rising trend in the number of outstanding trainees, rapid improvements in trainees' subject knowledge and their ability to use this in their teaching, and in improved retention and increases in the number and achievement of male trainees. Positive impact is also evident in improving trends in the already significantly above-average responses in the NQT survey, as well as exceptionally high employment and retention rates. Most importantly, the success can be seen in rising standards for pupils in local schools.
28. The provider has drawn up requirements to ensure that all training embeds the core threads of assessment for learning, reflection and focus on learning, in order to deepen the trainees' learning and ensure that they develop important higher-level skills. Training is monitored carefully to ensure that requirements are met and, as a result, trainee evaluations of core training are exceptionally high and improving. There are no negative or 'satisfactory' evaluations and more than three quarters judge the training as excellent. Feedback from school-based trainers and school leaders is also exceptionally positive and contributes to self-evaluation and review. The provider is aware that such a close-knit partnership could become insular and actively seeks challenge and review from external sources such as the Teaching Agency, National College for School Leadership and from other providers. External examiners confirm the accuracy and rigour of assessments and also the high quality of the course and its leaders, trainers, teachers and trainees.

29. The trainee survey carried out for the inspection shows very positive evaluations across all aspects and no negative judgements. Trainees are particularly positive about aspects of leadership and management and about how the leaders provide excellent support and take their views into account, manage placements efficiently and support them to complete the course and become good and outstanding teachers.
30. The wider influence of the partnership is increasingly realised in the provider's standing as a teaching school, working in partnership with the local authority to bring about improvement in underperforming schools. As well as developing and capitalising on leadership skills, ex-trainees are increasingly influential in bringing about improvements at classroom and whole-school levels. The partnership provides a range of support for teachers and potential teachers at various stages in their career. Ex-trainees who participate in the NQT or outstanding teacher programmes talk about how they bring this expertise into their current role. Partnership schools are keen to develop their own expertise and influence, and several of the partnership headteachers are National and Local Leaders in Education. The partnership is building its number and variety of specialist teachers and these include several ex-trainees. Two of the programme leaders are accredited by the National College as specialist leaders in initial teacher education and the partnership has a specialist leader in business and finance. In this way the partnership has a wide range of expertise and provides a sophisticated level of support to the wider education community.
31. The continued improvements in trainee outcomes and in the quality of training show that Two Mile Ash Partnership is managing the transition from the current programme to providing a school-centred initial teacher training route, in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University, very well indeed. The partnership is aware that the greatest challenge now is to maintain excellence and bring about further improvements when the provision changes and doubles in the number of routes, schools and trainees.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Two Mile Ash School
Oxley Park Academy
Loughton Manor School
Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School
The Portfields School

ITE partnership details

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