

University of Birmingham

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

20–23 May 2013

This inspection was carried out by seven of Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI), a seconded inspector (SI) and two additional inspectors (AI) in accordance with the *ITE Inspection Handbook*. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from January 2013

The inspection draws upon evidence from each phase and separate programme 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

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

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Key findings

- The leadership and management of both the primary and secondary phases of the partnership are outstanding. High quality training has been sustained and, as a result, outcomes for trainees are excellent and continue to improve.
- Trainees, whether training to become teachers in primary schools or in 11-18 schools, express great confidence that the training will equip them to teach well. They are right to do so.
- Schools across both partnerships are fully committed to ensuring trainees become at least good and often outstanding teachers. Along with university link and subject tutors they know the trainees very well. This knowledge ensures trainees make at least good progress in their training.
- Such is the confidence of schools that trainees from the University of Birmingham are of high quality, employment rates for both primary and secondary phases exceed national averages by some margin.
- Trainees display excellent professional qualities: they are clear that good teaching leads to pupils who are interested in their work, enjoy learning and behave well.
- Trainees reflect very well on the quality of their own teaching and the impact this has on the learning of their pupils. They are also equipped well with the skills they need to develop further as professionals.

To improve the ITE partnership should:

- Sharpen the evidence that secondary trainees exceed the Teachers' Standards by leaders of the secondary partnership considering how the methods used by their primary colleagues could be adapted across the different subjects to ensure a consistent approach
- Enable even more trainees in the primary phase to exceed the Teachers' Standards at an outstanding level by partnership leaders ensuring that all written feedback given by school-based mentors to trainees following observations of teaching is of the same high quality as the best.

Information about this ITE partnership

- The University of Birmingham is a long established provider of ITE. It offers primary and secondary teacher education courses. Successful trainees gain qualified teacher status (QTS) and are awarded a masters' level Postgraduate Diploma in Education with 120 credits.
- At the time of this inspection there were 124 trainees on the primary course and 217 on the secondary course.

The primary phase

Information about the primary partnership

- The University of Birmingham offers a one year programme leading to the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Education with QTS.
- There are two courses within the programme: Early Years (3-7) and General Primary (5-11). At the time of the inspection there were 29 trainees following the Early Years course and 95 following the General Primary course.
- The primary partnership works with approximately 90 schools and settings, the majority of which are in and around Birmingham.

Information about the primary ITE inspection

- This inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's inspectors.
- At the time of the inspection all trainees were in the third week of their third and final school experience.
- Inspectors took into account the 55 responses received from trainees via Ofsted's online questionnaire. The findings from the national newly qualified teacher (NQT) survey were also taken into account.
- Inspectors visited ten schools. They observed the teaching and held discussions with 21 trainees and six NQTs (former trainees from the university who completed their training in 2012).
- Discussions covering aspects of training, leadership and outcomes for trainees were held with university and partnership leaders, headteachers, school-based mentors and subject tutors.

Inspection team

Mark Williams HMI
Philip Mann HMI
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Lead inspector
Team inspector
Team inspector
Team inspector

Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the primary partnership are:

- The high quality personalised support for trainees that enables all to become at least good teachers with the majority exceeding the Teachers' Standards at an outstanding level.
- The high quality training in mathematics and phonics (letters and the sounds they make) that enables trainees to develop excellent subject knowledge and teach these subjects and skills well.
- Trainees' very strong commitment to teaching based on their clear view that children, regardless of their ability, should learn well, achieve their potential and enjoy school.
- The excellent, ambitious leadership of the partnership that ensures high quality training and mentoring which ensures all trainees are prepared well to teach, depending on training, the Early Years Foundation Stage or the National Curriculum and promote in their pupils good behaviour for learning.
- The positive way in which trainees respond to the rigorous demand of their training – both academic and practical – in order to analyse the effectiveness of their own teaching and the impact it has on the learning of their pupils.
- The employability of trainees and the contributions they make to schools in the region.
- The way trainees are equipped with the skills they need to take control of their future professional development and to secure promotion.

What does the primary partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Enable even more trainees in the primary phase exceed the Teachers' Standards at an outstanding level by partnership leaders ensuring that all written feedback given by school-based mentors to trainees following observations of teaching is of the same high quality as the best.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding

1. All groups of trainees achieve well. Over the last three years well over half of trainees have been judged by the partnership to have exceeded the Teachers' Standards at an outstanding level. This year, this figure is predicted to rise to over two-thirds with the remaining trainees exceeding at a good level. Inspectors judge these predictions to be accurate. It is little wonder then that employment rates are so high and have been consistently so over the last three years. Trainees clearly enjoy their training as demonstrated by the very positive responses to both the NQT survey and online questionnaire. They show great resilience in staying on the course despite the heavy academic and practical demands. Completion rates are above average. This resilience equips them well for full-time class responsibility.
2. Trainees display a very strong commitment to teaching and excellent practice in relation to the Teachers' Standards. Trainees have a clear view that children, regardless of their ability, should learn well, achieve their potential and enjoy school. Particularly strong is their promotion of good behaviour so that their pupils want to learn and enjoy school. This is because trainees make learning fun and relevant. They do this well across all subjects so that, for example, pupils may be learning about the Tudors while at the same time use different compass points to find the directions to a hidden treasure chest. Activities such as these involve their pupils well in their learning and show trainees are clear that how well pupils behave is linked strongly to the quality of teaching.
3. Trainees respond positively to the rigorous demands of their academic and practical training. As a result, they analyse well the effectiveness of their own teaching and the impact it has on the learning of their pupils. For example, while trainees and NQTs check the learning of their pupils well, on a few occasions trainees miss opportunities to check the learning of all before moving on to the next part of the lesson. Trainees recognise this and make amends in future lessons. Overall trainees have a clear picture of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and use this information to re-shape lessons and plan future learning opportunities. Both NQTs and trainees know what they want their pupils to learn and through their marking they offer clear advice to pupils on how work may be improved.
4. The great majority of trainees' questioning is sharp and trainees prompt pupils into finding solutions for themselves or in groups. This equips them well when they take full responsibility for classes of their own. One NQT, for example, provided her Year 3 pupils with mock information from a chocolate manufacturer challenging her class to create a new

item of confectionary. The NQT gave no answers herself but instead prompted her pupils to find combinations of ingredients that added up to 1000g. This they did successfully. Not only was the NQT able to check the understanding of all her pupils, she was able to re-shape questions that ensured those who struggled initially found success. Furthermore, her very strong teaching paved the way for future learning where they would halve and double quantities to make chocolate bars of different sizes.

5. Trainees' subject knowledge is excellent and they use this very well in their teaching. For example they confidently use the correct mathematical language when teaching new concepts to pupils. They make very good use of questions and practical experiences to consolidate pupils' learning such as tallying the colours of sweets before completing a bar graph. Trainees also ensure that pupils' mathematical skills are developed further through other subjects. Their knowledge of phonics and how this helps them to teach reading is equally strong. Young children, for example, quickly learn to recognise, say and write the sounds at the beginning, in, and at the end of words. Further challenge is given by trainees to younger children such as these in the finding of the 's' sound in sentences such as 'Can a slug skip?'
6. As a result of the high quality training NQTs prove to be assets to their employing schools. For example, one NQT has designed a portal in which parents of her pupils have become more involved with the learning of their children. A good number of former trainees have also accepted additional responsibilities such as mentoring trainees and have been promoted to senior positions.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding

7. Both the NQT survey and the online questionnaire indicate high levels of confidence in the way training at the university and in schools prepare trainees to teach well. NQTs and trainees interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about their preparedness to teach phonics, mathematics, pupils with special educational needs, and how to promote good behaviour for learning.
8. High quality training in the teaching of phonics and mathematics ensures that trainees teach these skills and subjects well. From the very beginning of the training subject audits and well-designed directed tasks are used most effectively to assess and deepen trainees' subject knowledge further. This subject knowledge is then built on in taught sessions which provide trainees with a clear focus on how to make learning practical and investigative. Trainees also benefit from good opportunities to observe best practice in the teaching of phonics and

mathematics both at the university and in schools. As a consequence of this high quality training trainees' pupils make good strides in their learning.

9. High quality training is not just limited to phonics and mathematics. The professional studies element strengthens both trainees' confidence and competence in supporting pupils with special educational needs and promoting good behaviour. As a result, trainees prepare lessons increasingly well that meet the needs of all pupils regardless of ability. Furthermore, the thematic weeks which involve trainees finding meaningful links across all subjects, including information communications technology, mean trainees are prepared equally well to teach, depending on their training, the National Curriculum or the Early Years Foundation Stage.
10. School-based mentors, including those new to the partnership are trained very well. The quality of their work is assured by the highly respected link tutors. As a result, judgements mentors make about the quality of trainees are accurate and the targets set most appropriate. The feedback school-based mentors give to trainees following observations of lessons is always helpful. On occasions, though, it lacks the sharpness of the very best.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding

11. Leaders, including the partnership steering group which comprises representatives from schools, are ambitious. They make no apologies for designing a programme that has high expectations of trainees in terms of academic rigour and practical application. Importantly they have been successful in securing and sustaining high quality outcomes for trainees over time and have ensured compliance with all statutory requirements. It is of little wonder that in the online questionnaire no trainee questioned the effectiveness of leadership and management. The partnership's capacity to bring about further improvements is clearly strong.
12. Leaders' high expectations have ensured strong levels of consistency across the partnership. The views of all partners, including trainees, are taken seriously. As a result of work with schools the partnership has a clear system in place to assess most accurately the strengths of individual trainees and measure how well they exceed the Teachers' Standards. This well-understood system, when coupled with the very well organised audits, provides the basis for the highly personalised support trainees receive. The success of this support is evident in the at least good progress trainees make, including those who for whatever

reason experience difficulties. This high quality personalised support also enables all trainees become at least good teachers with the majority exceeding the Teachers' Standards at an outstanding level.

13. The partnership's plans for improvement are clear and most appropriate. They are based on thorough and accurate self-evaluation and programme review. Both timescales and criteria for success are clear. The partnership does not stand still. In mathematics, for example, leaders' pursuit of excellence is reflected in the development of a new nationally recognised programme with a partnership school to increase local expertise in the teaching of mathematics.
14. The training mentors receive is thorough and a pre-requisite for taking on the role. Attendance at training events is high with follow up sessions for those unable to attend. Training includes sampling reports about trainees' progress and giving feedback in role play scenarios. Because the partnership knows its mentors and schools well, placements for trainees are chosen carefully and ensure at least good progress is made.
15. Another reason why trainees achieve such high outcomes and are so employable is that the right candidates are chosen for the course. Procedures for recruiting and selecting trainees are strong and include high numbers from minority ethnic backgrounds and increasing numbers of males on the Early Years course. Representatives from partnership schools play a key part in the selection process. Information gained from interview feeds directly into the training and this ensures trainees get off to a flying start.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Chilcote Primary School
Cotteridge Junior & Infant School
Gig Mill Primary School
Greet Primary School
Lickey Hills Primary School
Moor Green Primary School
Park Hill Primary School
Rednal Hill Infant School
Robin Hood Junior & Infant School
Victoria Park Academy

The secondary phase

Information about the secondary partnership

- The secondary provision comprises a one-year full-time course leading to the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education with QTS.
- The following subjects are offered: English; geography; history; history with citizenship; modern foreign languages in French, German and Spanish; physical education; mathematics; physics with mathematics; religious education; physics; chemistry; and biology. There is also a two-year mathematics course for non-specialists.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 217 secondary trainees. There are 84 partnership secondary schools.

Information about the secondary ITE inspection

- This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors, one seconded inspector and two additional inspectors.
- Inspectors observed 26 lessons taught by trainees of which 21 were joint observations with subject mentors. Inspectors observed five lessons taught by NQTs from the university's 2011-12 courses.
- Discussions were held with a further 13 trainees and ten NQTs. Further discussions were held with university programme leaders, the Head of the School of Education, subject tutors, subject mentors, senior mentors, NQT mentors and headteachers.
- Inspectors took into account the 120 responses to the online questionnaire and to the 2012 NQT survey.
- Inspectors examined records of mentor training events, and details of training materials. They also considered a wide range of documentary evidence relating to outcomes for trainees and leadership, including the partnership's self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspection Team

Brian Cartwright HMI	Lead inspector
Pippa Jenkinson SI	Assistant lead inspector
Robert Barbour HMI	Team inspector
Michael Maddison HMI	Team inspector and subject inspector-thematic programme: history
Faysal Mikdadi AI	Team inspector and subject inspector-thematic programme: Modern foreign languages
Terry Russell AI	Team inspector and subject inspector-thematic programme: science

Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the secondary partnership are:

- The consistently outstanding outcomes for trainees in all subject areas over time and exceptionally high employment rates.
- The high quality training that centres on frequent, insightful assessment and feedback of trainees' strengths and areas for development.
- The high quality subject knowledge development of trainees, coupled with their strong understanding of addressing special educational needs, which enables them to quickly contribute effectively in their new schools.
- The confident and independent trainees who manage pupil behaviour in their classes well.
- The 'Whole School Issues' training programme that is exceptionally well planned to synchronise university-based training with school placements.
- Tutors and mentors who have excellent knowledge of individual trainees' development, leading to personalised improvement targets.
- The consistently high levels of commitment to the partnership by mentors, school leaders and university staff leading to frequent evaluation and improvement.

What does the secondary partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Implement common procedures and criteria between subjects for evaluating the extent to which trainees are exceeding the Teachers' Standards by the end of the course.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding

16. All trainees who qualify exceed the Teachers' Standards well. As a result employment rates are high with almost all trainees gaining employment in teaching. This is because headteachers actively seek new teachers from this partnership. They appreciate trainees have consistently high quality subject knowledge, are committed to teaching, and are skilled in self-evaluation.
17. The excellent subject knowledge development of trainees enables them to quickly contribute that expertise effectively in their new schools. Coupled with their clear understanding of education research, it also enables them to develop and use highly effective questioning skills. It also allows trainees to plan interesting lesson activities that maximises pupils' understanding of the subject and minimises scope for distracting behaviour.
18. Trainees manage pupil behaviour in their classes well. They have a particularly strong understanding of how to address special educational needs. As a result, trainees challenge and support their pupils well. All trainees understand their role in developing the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils they teach, although there is a stronger focus on literacy than numeracy in their lesson planning. In addition, because of the high quality training, all trainees have successful experience of teaching a range of pupils including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language.
19. Trainees develop a strong practical understanding of assessment and feedback to pupils, modelled on their own experience of receiving feedback of equal quality throughout their training. As a result trainees have developed clear strategies to monitor and record the progress of pupils. Almost all are applying their knowledge of the different abilities and starting points of pupils in their lessons, through re-shaping lessons and planning future learning for example. In a few cases, though, this is not recorded clearly in written lesson plans.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding

20. The high quality training centres on frequent, insightful assessment and feedback of trainees' strengths and areas for development. This formative approach is deeply embedded in the training programme in all subjects, and forms the core of the excellent professional training of mentors and tutors. This methodology is the primary reason why trainees become deeply self-reflective, and are exceptionally well

equipped to take responsibility for their future professional development. The partnership knows its mentors and schools well. As a result, placements for trainees are complementary and chosen carefully and ensure at least good progress is made.

21. The expectations on trainees for organising and cataloguing evidence are high although they vary between subjects. Particularly strong practice is evident, for example, in science. Weekly meetings with mentors are recorded consistently and nearly always contain clear developmental targets related to the Teachers' Standards. The progress of trainees towards meeting these standards is recorded in a simple 'met/not met' format. While inspection evidence shows trainees are exceeding the Teachers' Standards, and a large number consistently at an outstanding level, there is no formal process of assessing this such as that found in the primary phase.
22. The development of trainees' subject knowledge begins prior to the start of training by means of detailed audits. Throughout all the courses, tutors and mentors continually refer to aspects of subject knowledge that need improving and arrange learning activities to meet these needs. In this respect training is personalised very well. In all subjects there is a high level of access to the subject staff and effective regular communication between trainees and the course tutor. Trainees and NQTs speak in glowing terms of this contact and its benefits for them as they develop as trainees and later as practitioners.
23. The 'Whole School Issues' training programme is exceptionally well planned to synchronise university-based training with school placement sessions. Trainees unanimously report their satisfaction with the quality of their training and the high level of preparedness they felt when commencing their first teaching posts. This is evident in the competence with which they not only manage pupil behaviour in their later placements, but promote good behaviour for learning too.
24. Training quality in science, modern foreign languages and history (the three subjects inspected as part of Ofsted's thematic work) is of high quality. Communications between university tutors, trainees and subject mentors is strong and enables the subject training to integrate well with the school-based elements. Trainees in all three subjects are able to identify what they need to accomplish to improve; this characteristic makes them highly sought after by partnership and other schools across and beyond the city.
25. A particular strength in science is the breadth of teaching that trainees receive across the complete 11-18 age range. Linked to this is the way that they review and develop their science subject knowledge within a framework that views science pedagogy as important as science subject

knowledge. Their subject knowledge is developed in their non-specialist science subjects through the opportunities given in their teaching timetables; this makes them highly employable as science teachers. In modern foreign languages, trainees demonstrate high levels of competency in teaching bilingual and trilingual pupils. Trainees themselves are encouraged to learn a third language of their own and many do so, thus enhancing their employability.

26. In history trainees are able to identify what they need to accomplish to improve and subsequently to do what is necessary to make the appropriate improvements. This characteristic makes them highly sought after by partnership and other schools across and beyond the city. A particular strength of the course is the lesson plan used by history trainees. This is because it gives a highly effective framework for guiding their planning. Trainees have a keen awareness of the current issues in teaching history, although they were much more confident in talking about secondary practice in history rather than primary practice. The course tutor motivates trainees with his high expectations, and his commitment to the subject and the development of trainees as effective practitioners. Trainees in all subjects are aware of the importance of developing both literacy and numeracy across subjects.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding

27. Leaders of the secondary partnership, like their primary counterparts, are ambitious and unapologetic about the demands of the course. They too have ensured the training is compliant with all statutory requirements. The success of their actions in ensuring high quality training and outcomes for trainees demonstrates the partnership's strong capacity to bring about further improvement.
28. The recruitment and selection of trainees is rigorous, and is enhanced by the strong involvement of representatives from the partnership. Given that most courses are substantially oversubscribed, the recruitment process selects graduates who demonstrate the potential to become reflective practitioners dedicated to making a difference to pupils learning, as well as the capacity to succeed in the masters-level academic demand of the diploma's assignments.
29. Recruitment to the physics course is not so successful, with the course not being filled to target in recent years. The in-course withdrawal from this course is also higher than the provider's overall low figure and the provider considers that this might be reflected in the recruitment from a much smaller pool of potential candidates. There are new strategies in place this year to market this course more widely in the region.

Withdrawals in modern foreign languages are not related to recruitment, but to personal circumstances of some candidates.

30. Tutors and school-based mentors have excellent knowledge of individual trainees' development. This drives the detailed feedback and support of each trainee and accelerates trainees' development. The processes for ensuring trainees meet the Teachers' Standards are robust. In this respect course tutors have the key role in quality assurance which includes individual dialogue with subject mentors, who are responsible for checking the sufficiency of evidence against the standards. However, there are no common procedures between subjects for evaluating the extent to which trainees are exceeding the Teachers' Standards by the end of the course. Nevertheless, assessments of trainees' attainment are accurate and as a result of consultation with senior mentors, proposals have been drawn up to incorporate exemplar criteria illustrating good or outstanding outcomes similar to those found in the primary phase.
31. School-based mentors and senior mentors in particular play a consistent, key and constructive role in evaluating the provision and then developing the courses. School mentors unanimously said they are listened to, and genuinely feel included in the partnership. There are well attended centre-based development seminars that lead to changes in programme materials. Tutors, mentors and trainees value access to up to date cutting edge research in education and use this knowledge to enhance their teaching. Improvement planning focuses on responding to feedback and comments from the external examiner, trainees, mentors and any external agency report.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Alderbrook Leading Edge School and Arts College
Bartley Green Technology College
Baverstock Sports College
Broadway School
Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Technology College
Great Barr Science College
Hall Green School
Hamstead Hall Community Learning Centre
Heartlands Academy
Holte Visual and Performing Arts College
King's Norton Boys' School
Lode Heath School & Sports College
Lordswood Girls' School
Lyndon School Humanities College
North Birmingham Academy

Plantsbrook Technology College
Queensbridge School
Selly Park Technology College for Girls
Shenley Academy
Swanshurst School
Waverley School
Windsor High School & Sixth Form
Woodrush High School
Yardleys School

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70001
Inspection number	411654
Inspection dates	20–23 May 2013
Lead inspector	Mark Williams HMI
Type of ITE partnership	Higher Education Institution
Phases provided	Primary and secondary
Date of previous inspection	23–27 May 2011
Previous inspection report	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70001
Provider address	School of Education Edgbaston Birmingham B15 2TT