

University of Buckingham ITE Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 24–27 June 2013

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors 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 the primary and secondary programmes 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 and secondary 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 primary and secondary route

Information about the primary and secondary partnership

- The University of Buckingham provides a unique training course for teachers employed in independent and maintained schools wanting to achieve qualified teacher status (QTS). The partnership is a national partnership and, while several partner schools work with the university every year, other schools join the partnership when they have trainees who wish to apply and are ready for this QTS training route.
- The university offers a one-year, full-time postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) with QTS for secondary and primary trainees. The primary route has been introduced since the last inspection. At the time of the inspection, there were 31 primary trainees and 104 secondary trainees. Currently, the course for secondary trainees is offered in 13 subjects: classics, English, music, drama, physical education, science, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, religious education, art, geography, and design and technology.
- The university provides three residential courses and all trainees undertake a minimum of a three-week, second school placement in a maintained school.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited 12 schools to observe lessons taught by 13 trainees and four by newly qualified teachers (NQTs).
- Inspectors held meetings in schools with school-based mentors, with professional tutors, and interviewed trainees and NQTs individually and in small groups.
- Inspectors scrutinised trainees' evidence files and PGCE assignments, course handbooks, external examiners' reports and course development plans. In addition, inspectors looked at findings from the university's own surveys of trainees' views about their training, feedback from the university's visiting tutors and outcomes data for current and former trainees.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders in schools, the course leaders at the university and the Dean of the Department of Education. Inspectors also conducted telephone calls with trainees, NQTs and senior leaders in schools.
- Inspectors considered published survey data, including the NQT survey from 2011, and took account of 80 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Joanna Beckford-Hall, HMI	Lead Inspector
Daniel Burton, HMI	Assistant Lead Inspector
Trevor Riddiough, HMI	Team Inspector
Terry Hunt, Additional Inspector	Team Inspector
Heidi Boreham, Additional Inspector	Team Inspector

Overall Effectiveness**Grade: 2****The key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership are:**

- high completion rates sustained over time
- trainees' commitment, enthusiasm and high levels of professionalism which help them to become highly reflective, good-quality teachers
- excellent pastoral support for trainees which helps them to make good progress and attain well by the end of the course
- efficient and effective communication between the course leaders at the university and partner schools
- a good-quality training course which uses expertise in schools and at the university to develop effectively trainees' subject and teaching skills
- course leaders' expertise and commitment to working with school-based consortia to help their expansion into initial teacher education
- the well-above-average recruitment of male trainees onto the primary route
- good training in the teaching of English and phonics (the sounds that letters make) which enables trainees to teach reading, writing and spelling to a good standard.

What does the primary and secondary partnership need to do to improve further?**The partnership should:**

- Increase the proportion of outstanding trainees by:
 - ensuring consistent, high-quality mentoring across the partnership
 - sharing best practice
 - improving the work of the university's visiting tutors in developing the coaching skills of professional tutors and mentors.

- Ensure that the timing of the second school placement allows all trainees to use the understanding and skills gained from this contrasting experience when they return to their main training school.
- Engage schools in the strategic development of the partnership by encouraging school leaders to play a greater part in course development planning in order to enhance further the quality of training and outcomes for all trainees.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good.

1. Trainees are selected by schools and the university on the basis of their determination and competence as unqualified teachers in their employing school. Most join the course following competitive interviews in their schools which fund their training. Trainees are highly committed to making their training year a success and to exceeding the minimum level of practice laid out in the Teachers' Standards. Because trainees are already practising teachers, they are generally well attuned to balancing hard work in schools with the development of their practice. The recruitment of trainees from under-represented groups is below the sector average. However, since the inception of the primary route two years ago, the recruitment of men has risen to well above the national average.
2. Completion rates for secondary and primary trainees are above the national average. On rare occasions when trainees defer or withdraw, course leaders analyse the reasons carefully. Those who defer and re-join the course are well supported and succeed in qualifying.
3. Trainees' attainment is good. The proportion of secondary trainees exceeding the minimum level required by the Teachers' Standards has been above 50% for more than three years and the proportion of primary trainees doing the same continues to rise. However, while assessment processes are generally used well to monitor the progress of trainees, inspectors judged that a small minority are graded too generously in their final assessments and are good rather than outstanding teachers at the end of their training.
4. There are no significant differences between the performances of male and female trainees, and trainees of different ethnicities. A slightly higher percentage of trainees aged 25 to 29 attain at an outstanding level. University leaders are monitoring this carefully and working with visiting tutors to make certain that all trainees are challenged to develop their planning and teaching from good to outstanding.

5. The great majority of trainees remain in their employing school when they have completed the course. Very few leave teaching. University leaders do not yet track the employment patterns of alumni to collate information about career progression and the proportions continuing to teach in independent schools or moving to maintained schools.
6. Former and current primary and secondary trainees use their good subject knowledge to plan and teach good, and occasionally outstanding, lessons, and they sustain this quality over time. Trainees are reflective and highly self-critical; they are determined to improve their teaching. Key strengths of trainees' achievement are their professional conduct, good organisational skills and emotional resilience. They balance well the demands of their training with their wide professional responsibilities in schools, such as boarding house roles and sports coaching commitments. Trainees are very well organised and inspectors saw many well-presented evidence files showing a good range of evidence for the Teachers' Standards; trainees take much care to document their progress and that of their pupils.
7. Detailed lesson planning, imaginative teaching, the careful assessment of pupils' learning, good questioning, the effective pace of lessons and good behaviour management typify trainees' strengths as teachers. The few trainees and NQTs whose teaching is not always up to par are eager to listen and respond to advice.

The quality of training across the partnership is good.

8. The combination of three good-quality residential courses, helpful guidance from the university's visiting tutors, good training in schools and useful course handbooks ensures that trainees can aim high and do well. Trainees rise to the challenges of the course and both secondary and primary trainees benefit from excellent pastoral care in school and at the university. The residential courses bring together theory and practice well. Most trainees are positive about how residential course trainers model approaches that can be used in the classroom. The PGCE assignments are well structured, encouraging trainees to challenge theory through practice.
9. Subject training is good. Secondary trainees often have high levels of subject knowledge and expertise, and show a good understanding of the syllabuses for the IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate and of GCSE and A/AS-level specifications. There are good opportunities to teach Year 12 and Year 13 students in most school placements and the university's team makes certain that throughout the year trainees are teaching across two key stages.

10. Secondary trainees are taught how to plan and teach lessons effectively. In an independent school geography lesson, for example, a trainee showed great creativity in devising highly engaging tasks requiring pupils to debate demands on water usage in the United Kingdom. Pupils made excellent progress because of the trainee's high-quality planning and excellent questioning; pupils assessed their water usage and made inferences and drew hypotheses from different types of evidence. This was an inspiring, well-planned lesson. By contrast, a few trainees struggle to plan for classes in maintained schools where pupils' levels of ability are more mixed. These trainees do not teach well enough to meet the needs of pupils with moderate learning difficulties who are doing less well than their classmates, for example, without lowering their expectations. Trainees' planning for gifted and talented pupils and more-able pupils is often good.
11. Primary trainees are enthusiastic teachers who plan their lessons methodically to include enjoyable activities matched well to pupils' abilities. Challenging training means that trainees are willing to try out a range of teaching techniques and reflect on their success. Trainees' pedagogic skills and subject knowledge develop well in school because most trainees plan collaboratively with their mentors to choose appropriate activities. Primary trainees acquire a good understanding of teaching phonics through good training in schools and expert lectures on their residential courses. They teach reading and spelling well and develop pupils' speaking, listening and writing with confidence; trainees are less good at teaching mathematics.
12. Most trainees and NQTs set high expectations for pupils, helping them adopt good attitudes to their education. Most trainees feel that they benefit significantly from the sessions on managing behaviour on the residential courses. They understand the crucial links between well-planned teaching, engaging pupils in tailored activities, good relationships and consistency which contribute to successful lessons. Trainees and NQTs are very confident in managing behaviour in their independent schools, as they are in maintained schools when behaviour policies and expectations are stringently upheld.
13. The residential courses are taught by university experts and staff from schools, and cover well the teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. Most trainees also develop a good understanding of cultural, social and linguistic diversity and the potential barriers to learning, such as social deprivation, but their practical application of this understanding meets with varying success. Some, but not all, trainees plan lessons that include different tasks, resources, time frames and outcomes targeted to the ability and needs of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs. Similarly, both primary and secondary trainees are

less confident when teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language and when working with teaching assistants.

14. School placements within the employing independent schools are of good quality. Most trainees experience sufficiently contrasting second school placements in maintained schools. Some trainees describe their experiences of behaviour and diversity in these placements as the catalyst for developing their skills in handling tough situations in lessons. Others are less sure about dealing with behaviour issues. Some would like longer second placements to consolidate their behaviour-management skills and develop their confidence.
15. Second school placements provide trainees with the opportunity to teach pupils of wide-ranging ability, pupils with different physical and learning needs, and pupils from minority ethnic groups. Some trainees also benefit from experience in preparatory schools and special schools. The university and the trainees rightly regard the second placements as important, but the three-week allocation is limiting. The partnership agreement with schools stipulates that the optimum time for the three-week placement is in the spring term so that trainees can reflect on and consolidate their experiences when returning to their main training schools. This is not upheld by all partner schools. A few school mentors do not visit trainees on the second placement. This limits the opportunities for mentors to see how well trainees teach and progress in a different school and capitalise on what trainees have learned on their return.
16. The university provides training for professional tutors and mentors to clarify expectations and the duties involved. School-based trainers say that this training is mostly of good quality and helps them learn how to judge trainees' progress, give feedback after lesson observations and check trainees' progress and evidence of attainment in relation to the Teachers' Standards. Most mentors are adept at helping trainees to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and to set precise, short-term targets. A priority this year is for university tutors to help mentors to set trainees targets that will move them from good to outstanding. Where this works well, trainees revisit their planning and teaching approaches to provide further challenge to pupils. However, target setting by some mentors is not always sufficiently sharp, falling back on generic targets such as 'differentiation' or 'try something new'. Inspectors found that some lessons graded as good were not followed by targets for improvement that might move the teaching and learning on to outstanding.
17. The university's virtual learning environment provides a wide range of documents that are of practical help in lesson planning and providing imaginative activities in the classroom. University leaders upload useful

documents about national developments and subject associations. Links to external websites help trainees to explore further sources for pedagogical and subject-specific discussions and written assignments. Most trainees value this resource. Some do admit, however, that they could have made greater use of the virtual learning environment during their training.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is good.

18. The director of initial teacher training and the primary course leader are highly ambitious for trainees and for the success of the partnership. Working in excess of their part-time contracts, they both devote considerable time and effort to running the course and sustaining regular and effective communication with trainees and mentors in schools. Their commitment to the partnership schools is also clear in the time they and the Dean of the Department of Education give to working with schools to help expand initial teacher education through school-based training in various consortia.
19. The culture of high aspiration and the expectation that trainees and their mentors should do well is shared by the partnership. The partnership schools 'buy-into' this distinctive training course because it complements the demands of working in independent schools.
20. The processes for selecting and recruiting trainees are good. The university's interviews test trainees' resilience but fail to diagnose sufficiently well their development needs. University tutors and mentors are not pinpointing sufficiently the gaps in trainees' subject knowledge or how these can be developed over the year. Much subject knowledge development takes place in school departments and through trainees' independent research. Some trainees indicated to inspectors that they wanted more centrally-based, subject-specific training sessions.
21. The good work of the school-based mentors, the professional tutors and the university visiting tutors ensures that trainees have regular and well-focused feedback to help them become at least good teachers. The system for checking the quality of school-based trainers' work relies heavily on three one-day visits by the university tutors. When this works well, university tutors and mentors observe trainees teaching together and then observe the mentors feeding back to the trainees. In some schools, university tutors also meet with the professional tutor to check trainees' progress and to review the quality of mentoring at the school. However, these good quality-assurance processes are not consistently applied across the partnership. There is limited formal feedback to mentors by university tutors or discussion of their strengths and weaknesses. In some schools, the professional tutors neither evaluate their mentors' work nor report this back to the university.

22. Despite these inconsistencies, the director of initial teacher training and the primary course leader know which schools provide very high-quality training and which are less effective. This is because they maintain regular contact with schools and the university visiting tutors. Feedback from the visiting university tutors helps course leaders identify any issues arising with trainees or where there is weaker provision in schools. Course leaders are quick to respond to problems, for example by emailing requests for examples of mentor feedback for scrutiny.
23. Partnership schools are not sufficiently involved in the moderation of each other's work. Several mentors explained how much they would value visiting other schools within the geographic proximity to share best practice and enhance their mentoring skills. The virtual learning environment is underdeveloped as a platform for sharing resources and for training mentors and professional tutors.
24. Processes for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the training are good. Course leaders analyse feedback from trainers, trainees and external examiners to evaluate all aspects of the training. Feedback about the residential courses is well used to refine the content, timing and delivery of the face-to-face sessions, and trainers receive feedback and ratings for their sessions to help improvement. However, the views of NQTs and their employers are not systematically sought.
25. Findings from course evaluations and trends in the outcomes for trainees over time are used to set strategic priorities in the annual development plan. The university shares strategic priorities with mentors and professional tutors at training days, but school-based trainers do not always know how they could help the partnership meet priorities and secure a higher proportion of outstanding trainees. Few school leaders who met with inspectors could describe how they contribute to the university's self-evaluation document or the development plan. The partnership does not have a formal advisory group of senior leaders from schools to work with university leaders to plan and monitor the improvement plans.
26. The partnership is compliant with the national requirements for initial teacher education.

Annex: Partnership Schools

- Wellington College
- Repton School
- Sherborne School
- Stowe School
- Bedford School
- Cuckoo Hall Academy
- St Edward's School
- The Hemel Hempstead School
- St Helen and St Katharine School
- Great Houghton School
- Crown House School
- Hampton School

ITE partnership details

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