

South West Teacher Training

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 2–5 December 2013

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty’s 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 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

	Secondary QTS
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 secondary phase

Information about the secondary partnership

- This school-centred initial teacher training partnership involves 20 secondary schools based in the South West of England across four local authority areas. Training is offered to provide initial teacher education in the 11 to 16 age range leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In addition, trainees' assignments can earn masters-level credits which can lead to a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).
- At the time of the inspection, 14 trainees were being trained through placements in 11 partnership schools. This is fewer than half the number at the time of the last inspection, following a period of turbulence in the partnership's leadership. Three trainees were being trained to teach design and technology, five to teach science, and six to teach modern foreign languages.
- The lead school is West Exe Technology College in Exeter, where a specialist teaching centre is based and much of the central training takes place. The scheme is managed by a group of governors and headteachers that make up the consortium management board.

Information about the secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons taught by trainees and two by newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in seven schools. All of these observations were undertaken jointly with mentors or partnership subject course tutors.
- Inspectors also held discussions with: individual trainees and former trainees working in partnership schools; subject course tutors; leaders, managers and headteachers; and school-based staff, including mentors and professional tutors.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence including information related to recruitment and selection, statutory compliance with the initial teacher training criteria, tracking and assessment, trainees' teaching evidence and assignments, analysis of outcomes for trainees, evaluations and improvement plans, external moderator/examiner reports, surveys of the views of trainees and NQTs, and the university's electronic information portal.

Inspection Team

Ian Hodgkinson HMI: lead inspector

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The key strengths of the secondary partnership are:

- High employment rates for trainees, which are testament to the strong development of their professional attributes and conduct.
- Trainees' good subject knowledge, which is evidenced strongly in their assignments and used to underpin their confident teaching.
- A good focus by trainees on promoting their students' literacy skills.
- The strong commitment of all partnership schools to the success of this well-regarded partnership, which is reflected in the high degree of collaboration used to refine and develop its programmes and procedures.
- A strong emphasis within the partnership on sustaining good-quality placements for trainees, which offer a range of experiences and enable them to get fully involved in all aspects of school life.
- Clear, precise targets for trainees' improvement set by mentors who take much responsibility for the progress of their trainees and ensure that they can gain access to support from a wide range of sources in and beyond school.
- Excellent systems of communication centred on the information portal, which allows centre-based and school-based trainers and trainees to keep in touch and maintain careful scrutiny of trainees' progress.
- Clear, strategic vision and planning for the future. The partnership is responding well to changing local and national structures, and needs in education, including the promotion of improvement in education in rural and coastal towns.

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

The partnership should:

- Develop trainees' understanding of how to use assessment information to inform their lesson planning earlier in their training, so that more-able students in their classes are always suitably stretched and challenged.
- Ensure that as far as possible any grading of trainees is linked to the outcomes for the students that they teach.
- Strengthen recruitment and selection procedures still further to sustain improvements in attainment and completion rates.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good

1. Trainees' attainment has risen since the last inspection. Most trainees have been judged good or better in the last two years, and last year over half were judged outstanding. The partnership has been successful in overcoming a sharp dip in the proportion completing the course shortly after the last inspection, and in raising the proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding. There are no significant or sustained differences in outcomes between subjects or groups of trainees.
2. While the small number of trainees makes meaningful year-on-year comparisons with national performance data difficult, over time the rates of completion for all subjects compare favourably with national averages. Over the last two full years, three trainees have withdrawn from the course, largely because of their personal circumstances. These withdrawals have all come from trainees in the 25–45 age range, but have been from different subjects.
3. Employment rates are consistently high, reflecting the success of the programme in meeting local needs for teachers in the subjects offered. While the numbers moving beyond the South West have steadily grown, still around three quarters of trainees find work within the region. Trainees, former trainees and school leaders point to the success of the programme in preparing trainees for the workplace by getting them into school placements early in their training and encouraging them to take part in a full range of activities within and beyond the classroom. For example, trainees talked with inspectors about the success of their work with tutor groups and extra-curricular clubs. A key strength of the programme lies in its development of trainees' professional attributes; most work very well with their colleagues and successfully promote the ethos of their placement school.
4. Trainees' subject knowledge and skills are key strengths, and underpin the enthusiasm they bring to their teaching. For example, in science, trainees give a high profile to practical, scientific enquiry in their lessons. This makes a major impact on the learning of students because it encourages them to explore, to ask questions and experiment. It also prompts interested discussion about science in general. In modern foreign languages, trainees' confidence and expertise encourage students to respond in the target language.
5. Resources for lessons are often well prepared, including specific resources to support disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. In one school, teaching assistants reported on how well the trainee had informed them in advance of what was being done, and

what was expected of them in the support given to individual students with specific needs.

6. Trainees promote students' literacy well. In design and technology, students in a Year 9 food technology class were able to understand and use a very good range of vocabulary linked to the scientific and technical processes used in making egg products. This was because of the trainee's high expectations and continual reinforcement of the terminology.
7. Trainees are generally confident in assertively implementing school behaviour policies and using a variety of techniques to keep students on task. However, in a few classes observed by inspectors, the chatter or restless behaviour of a minority of students distracted them and others from learning. This was because the work that trainees planned for students did not stretch and challenge some groups, especially the more-able students. At this early stage in their training, the trainees too often expect more-able students to complete work at the same level of challenge as all others in the group, and so these students get bored and fidgety. Trainees' understanding and use of assessment information, to plan challenging activities and to show students how to improve through marking and other feedback, is underdeveloped at present.

The quality of training across the partnership is good

8. The survey of the views of former trainees who become NQTs suggests that the training they received has prepared them well for the profession. Responses have been more favourable in the three years since the last inspection than for the three years prior to it. All 42 NQTs who responded felt that their training had been at least satisfactory, with 97% saying that it was good and 71% saying that it was very good. In comparison with survey responses nationally, this presents a highly positive picture, and is reflected in the views of current trainees through survey information and the views expressed to inspectors.
9. Trainees and former trainees feel that the great strength of South West Teacher Training is the opportunity to move quickly into school placements and begin getting teaching experience early in their training. They move into their first placement school in mid-September for three days a week until half term in October when they attend school full time. They are therefore able to learn in schools with strong support from their mentors and subject course tutors, and to apply their academic studies in the classroom from an early stage.
10. The general professional studies programme taught mainly in the training centre offers a well-designed programme of activities aimed at

giving trainees the knowledge and skills they need to teach. It is coordinated by subject course tutors who teach alongside experts in key aspects of educational theory and practice.

11. Central training is supported by the high profile given to the three assignments trainees complete during the year. These earn masters-level credits and lead to a PGCE which can supplement the award of QTS. Partnership leaders have sought to increase the proportion of trainees who attain this full award by giving assistance with assignment writing, although for some trainees, including those who already hold a masters degree, this is not a high priority. The assignments nonetheless support trainees' development well, focused as they are on the curriculum, special educational needs and assessment. The first assignment on the curriculum has enabled some trainees, especially those studying to teach modern foreign languages, to consider in detail the implications for the subject of the new National Curriculum. This has been supplemented by a training presentation of the new National Curriculum for all trainees.
12. Training in the assessment of students is planned for later in the academic year, in line with the third assignment. This is too late to help trainees to use assessment information well to plan challenging activities for all students in their classes, including the more-able students, and has an adverse impact on the quality of teaching for some. It also means that by the end of the first placement the use of formative assessment by some trainees to guide students in how to improve has been limited.
13. Centre-based training is supplemented by experiences in settings beyond their placement schools, including those linked to developing trainees' understanding of post-16 provision and primary schools. The development of trainees' post-16 experience and understanding of sixth-form study programmes is given an appropriate priority in training provision, and where placement schools have sixth forms, trainees are given the opportunity to work alongside staff in teaching sixth-form classes.
14. The support provided by mentors in school placements is generally highly regarded by trainees. Communication between mentors and subject course tutors is maintained very effectively through regular, well-structured and well-attended mentor meetings, and through the excellent information portal. The portal allows trainees and trainers to log and share information on all aspects of trainees' progress. It therefore facilitates rapid intervention where trainees' progress falters; mentors and subject course tutors alike, for example, regularly read trainees' reflective diary entries to judge when additional support may be required. In exceptional circumstances, a trainee's placement can be

switched, and there is evidence of success where this has been facilitated. Weekly meetings between mentors and trainees following lesson observations lead to very clear and specific targets for improvement, although these are not always subject-related. Mentors enable trainees to draw on support and expertise within and beyond the placement schools so that they can see and share best practice.

15. The award of grades for aspects of trainees' performance is too inconsistent between placements at present. This includes grading by staff other than mentors who observe trainees in schools, which was an issue at the last inspection. Awards of sub-grades for aspects of performance against the Teachers' Standards often take too little account of the impact of the trainee's work on the progress of their students; they can therefore be overgenerous. While this does not affect the overall grades awarded to the trainee at the end of their training, it does provide the trainees with mixed messages and does not always offer an indication of a clear trajectory of progress.
16. Trainees complete comprehensive subject knowledge audits prior to their training. The development of subject knowledge is carefully monitored by the subject course tutors in termly reviews, though less systematically so by mentors in school. The partnership has affiliation with subject associations and other key professional bodies to ensure that trainees have access to up-to-date resources. Training plans are well constructed to address trainees' need to develop aspects of their performance against the Teachers' Standards and to develop their subject knowledge and skills.
17. Placements are of a good quality and mainly in good schools. The balance between school placements is, where possible, carefully chosen to give trainees the opportunity of teaching in schools of different types or in different socio-economic contexts. Placements are structured to address individual training needs. For example, trainees in design and technology are asked to teach unfamiliar aspects of the subject using materials and processes outside their specialism to refine and develop their subject skills.
18. The partnership is acutely aware that, while its training is highly regarded, the least favourable responses in the newly qualified teacher survey concern aspects of teaching for diversity. This includes teaching students from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs, and students of different abilities. The need to prepare trainees more effectively to teach in a culturally and ethnically diverse society was a key area for improvement at the last inspection. The partnership has moved effectively to strengthen provision in this regard. The general professional studies programme, for example, now features a visit to a

London borough to look at the specific challenges of teaching in multi-ethnic settings, since no similar experiences are available locally.

19. Specific general professional studies sessions, and the support for trainees' planning given by mentors, have been effective in ensuring that current trainees plan well to meet the needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Trainees make use of individual education plans and other school information to ensure that they are fully aware of students' specific needs, and their lesson plans incorporate the use of resources which have been adapted explicitly to meet those needs. Trainees work well with teaching assistants in planning support for individual students.
20. Trainees are well prepared to incorporate aspects of literacy into their lesson plans; planning pro formas incorporate specific references to making provision to support students' literacy, and this is a good feature of many trainees' lessons. Trainees are encouraged to plan to develop a range of cross-curricular skills for their students; as a result, examples were seen in all subjects of trainees requiring students to apply their number skills to count, measure and interpret data.
21. Centre- and school-based training equips trainees with a good understanding of the techniques and procedures for managing poor behaviour. Where trainees do not plan activities with enough challenge, though, the behaviour of some students deteriorates. Trainees are given mostly thorough training in how to keep students safe, including from bullying. Training in identifying and dealing with aspects of cyber-bullying is comprehensive. Some trainees, however, have yet to develop a clear understanding of aspects of homophobic bullying and ways of recognising and countering this.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is good

22. The provider's leaders, working closely with mentors and professional tutors in partner schools, have set the partnership on a course of strong improvement and expansion. This is demonstrated in rising attainment rates and high employment rates for trainees, along with a broadening of the subject offer and the likely expansion of trainee numbers in the next academic year. Schools have a high regard for the quality of South West Teacher Training graduates, and commit themselves strongly to its success through the provision of time, resources and regular attendance at partnership meetings.
23. Following the last inspection, the unplanned and unforeseen departure of key senior leaders in both the partnership and its lead school

presented challenging instability, at a time of considerable change in the landscape of initial teacher education. As a consequence, the partnership did not position itself to offer School Direct places, and had a severe cut in its allocation of core places. The partnership responded by cutting overhead and staffing costs, and drawing for a period on reserves. It also began to implement its new strategic vision for the future. This will see it offer a mix of core QTS provision with PGCE, as well as supporting School Direct places in partner schools, including in new subjects of English and mathematics. As a consequence, trainee numbers are set to return to the levels of over 30 that were enrolled at the time of the last inspection.

24. The partnership has a good infrastructure in place to support such breadth and expansion through its central training facility and staffing expertise in partner schools. It is working more closely with schools in the local teaching school alliance to develop its offer more widely. The partnership has a good track record of helping local schools to raise educational standards in areas of social and economic disadvantage, including in rural and coastal towns where students' achievement is a national priority. It tracks the professional progress of former trainees, and can give examples of trainees moving rapidly into leadership positions and contributing markedly to school improvement.
25. The programme manager and assistant programme manager share their time between leadership positions in the partnership and the lead school. They ensure that the partnership is strongly focused on assuring the quality of provision and sustaining improvement. The programme manager's termly reports draw together a range of information, including reports of the external programme moderator, which offers a very clear evaluation of the partnership's overall performance. The evaluation of performance by subject is helpful, although there is less focus on the analysis of trainees' performance against strands of the teaching standards, to identify strengths and weaknesses.
26. The partnership's clear and concise improvement plan is sharply focused on the key areas for development identified through its self-evaluation. The plan has precise success criteria against which improvement can be measured. It is shared with partners through regular meetings of the consortium board and professional tutors. Through its sharp identification of key priorities and clear and decisive actions, it has made a significant contribution to the partnership's accelerated progress over the last two years and its good capacity to improve further. For example, to realise the partnership's aim of increasing the proportion of trainees gaining masters-level credits in their assignments, subject course tutors and programme managers have all been required to undertake masters-level study themselves.

27. Quality assurance processes and procedures are thorough and robust. The provision is therefore fully compliant with the criteria for initial teacher training. An external examiner from the University of Roehampton moderates and verifies assessments and scrutinises the quality of the provision and its outcomes. Examiners visit placements to observe teaching and aspects of mentoring and training. The external examiners' reports offer detailed appraisals of the quality of many aspects of the programme and are used effectively to inform programme evaluation and planning. Senior subject mentors have been appointed to support and develop further the quality of mentoring across the partnership.
28. Trainees said that they found information about the partnership informative and easy to access when they were seeking teacher training courses. They said that the recruitment process was a rigorous combination of skills tests, observation exercises and interviews. However, while trainees are observed interacting with students during lessons that they are observing, they are not observed teaching, and staff from all partner schools are not widely involved in the interview process. The partnership has successfully improved its recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups this year, but continues to recruit a relatively low proportion of male trainees.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Plymouth High School for Girls
Eggbuckland Community College, Plymouth
St Luke's Science and Sports College, Exeter
Honiton Community College
Exeter St James's School
West Exe Technology College
Tiverton High School

ITE partnership details

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