

Thamesmead SCITT

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 27–30 January 2014

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector 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 seven secondary schools based in Middlesex and north Surrey. Training is offered to provide initial teacher education in the 11–16 age range leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- At the time of this inspection, 10 trainees were being trained through placements in the partnership schools. This is fewer than at the time of the last inspection. Each year, the partnership recruits trainees to subjects dependent on the needs of its schools and the ability of subject departments to provide high-quality training. In the current cohort, trainees are being trained to teach English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history and physical education.
- The lead school is Thamesmead School in Shepperton. The scheme is directed by a management committee comprised of the course director, initial teacher education coordinators from each school and an external consultant.

Information about the secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors observed seven lessons taught by trainees and two by newly qualified teachers in six schools. All of the observations of trainees were undertaken jointly with mentors or school coordinators.
- Inspectors also held discussions with: the trainees and former trainees working in partnership schools; the course director and external consultant; lead- and partner-school headteachers; and school-based staff, including mentors, subject mentors and school coordinators.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including information related to recruitment and selection, statutory compliance with the initial teacher training criteria, the lead school governing body minutes, tracking and assessment records, trainees' teaching evidence and assignments, analysis of outcomes for trainees, the partnership improvement plan, the external moderator's report, and surveys of the views of trainees and newly qualified teachers.

Inspection Team

Ian Hodgkinson HMI: lead inspector

Dr John Menendez, additional inspector: assistant lead inspector

Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the secondary partnership are:

- In an area where recruitment of teachers is difficult, this training programme makes a significant contribution to the quality of education by providing partner schools with skilled and well-qualified new teachers.
- Trainees' professional attributes develop strongly; they provide very good role models for their students and get fully involved in the life of their schools.
- The development of trainees' subject knowledge is promoted strongly and monitored carefully; trainees have a very good understanding of the National Curriculum and a good understanding of 14–19 courses and pathways in their subjects.
- Trainees consistently plan and teach well-structured lessons.
- A high proportion of trainees are employed in partner schools and many rise quickly to take on positions of leadership and responsibility.
- The course director and the team of school coordinators have high expectations of the trainees, whose progress is monitored regularly and rigorously.
- The course director and external consultant check the quality of training across the partnership thoroughly, ensuring a good degree of consistency in the quality of the placements.
- The mentoring of trainees is of a high standard and mentors are very well supported through regular opportunities for training and development.
- The weekly general professional studies programme is highly regarded by trainees and contributes well to their development of knowledge and classroom practice.
- Communications across the partnership are very effective and ensure a high degree of collaboration between partner schools in providing training opportunities and sharing information on trainees' progress.

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

The partnership must:

- reduce the number of trainees who leave the programme prior to completion, by systematically analysing the reasons for withdrawal and reviewing its requirements for applicants to demonstrate an understanding of the rigours of a teaching career
- improve the quality of leadership by increasing the involvement of headteachers and governors in holding leaders to account for the partnership's performance and development
- ensure that development planning sets challenging improvement targets based on incisive self-evaluation which compares the partnership's outcomes with others in the sector, and regularly measures all aspects of performance against demanding quality criteria.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good

1. The training programme is highly valued by schools in the partnership as a source of well-qualified new teachers who are equipped with the skills and resilience required for successful teaching careers. This is important in an area where the high cost of housing often makes recruitment difficult. Trainees often find teaching jobs within the partnership, and many move quickly into positions of additional responsibility and leadership. Indeed, one of the partner schools has offered employment to all but one of the trainees placed with it in the last four years.
2. In the last two years, all trainees who have completed the programme have been judged good or outstanding. While the proportion of outstanding trainees declined over the same period, it is firmly set to rise again this year. Evidence from this inspection and school section 5 inspection indicates that former trainees who are now newly qualified teachers continue to perform strongly in the classroom.
3. Trainees demonstrate a number of common strengths in their practice. They engage fully in many aspects of the life of their schools, within and beyond lessons, and start to practise in the classroom early in the course, often following the first two weeks of their training and induction. They conduct themselves in a highly professional manner, and support and reinforce the ethos of the schools in which they teach. Trainees reflect thoroughly on their own practice and readily identify aspects in which they may need more support or training.
4. Trainees' degree qualifications on entry to the programme are higher than sector averages, and their well-developed subject knowledge and skills underpin their confident teaching. They make good progress in enhancing the breadth and use of their subject knowledge throughout the training. Weaker areas of subject knowledge are addressed through bespoke training sessions with subject specialists, or through opportunities to teach unfamiliar topics or courses in their home-school or second-school placements.
5. Trainees plan lessons thoroughly. Much thought is given to the careful preparation of resources, including very effective digital presentations, which help students' understanding of sometimes complex topics to grow quickly. One trainee, for example, was observed broadening his experience on a second placement by teaching AS-level history; he helped his students get a clear understanding of the roots of Italian fascism through well-prepared resources highlighting the motivation of key politicians in deciding on Italy's entry into the First World War.

6. Trainees know their classes well. They use seating plans to arrange students in groups and this is effective in promoting good learning and behaviour. They show a well-developed understanding of the need to plan resources to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language. They are aware of further potential barriers to learning, including for those students known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium. Trainees are less effective in explicitly providing activities to challenge the more-able students, both through their lesson plans and lesson activities.
7. Completion rates have been below national benchmarks, although they have shown some steady improvement over time. The small size of each cohort every year means that individual withdrawals have a substantial impact on the partnership's completion rates. Partnership leaders explain that withdrawals have largely occurred for personal reasons or illness, although there has not been a sharp evaluation of patterns in the reasons for withdrawal, and exit interviews have been offered but not systematically completed. Withdrawals have mainly occurred amongst trainees in the over-35 age groups, and in most years, at least one withdrawal has been from the partnership's small number of trainees from minority ethnic heritages. The need to raise completion rates is identified as a priority in the partnership's action plan, and action has been taken to ensure that applicants receive clear messages about the workload implications of this rigorous training programme.
8. The small numbers of trainees and substantial annual fluctuations in trainees per subject makes meaningful analysis of differences in outcomes between subjects or groups of trainees difficult. There are no substantial variations in outcomes by gender. Over time, the strongest performing subjects in terms of outstanding trainees have been English, information and communication technology, and history, while most withdrawals have occurred in mathematics.

The quality of training across the partnership is good

9. Nearly all of the trainees have a high regard for the training they receive. While a few find the paperwork demands onerous, all recognise that the partnership's high expectations equip them well for a teaching career. One trainee said of the level of detailed scrutiny and support provided by the school-based and centre-based staff and leader, 'It's pretty hard to mess up.'
10. The regular and rigorous monitoring of trainees' performance and a high degree of coherence in the training programme ensure that trainees

make good progress. A trainee's initial needs analysis feeds into a training plan, which is regularly updated as a working document, recording the trainee's targets as they arise from lesson observations and meetings with mentors. While these targets are not always clearly prioritised or given deadlines for achievement, they nonetheless build into a useful record of the trainee's development. The trainee profile document forms a very clear picture of the trainee's attainment against each of the Teachers' Standards over time. It clearly identifies the most important areas for development at key points of transition, for example, when a trainee moves to a second school placement at the start of the spring term. This enables the training opportunities to be tailored to the needs of the trainee, for example, the opportunity to teach post-16 lessons or vocational courses, or to teach in more ethnically diverse settings.

11. The development of trainees' subject knowledge is particularly carefully supported and monitored. Trainees are provided with very effective cross-partnership subject mentoring by subject specialists in partnership schools. The small numbers of trainees allows subject training to be shaped according to need. The partnership has made training in the new National Curriculum a priority in its action plan and developed both central- and school-based training to reflect changes. Trainees are fully aware of the key changes to the curriculum in their subject specialism and these are referred to directly in training sessions. Trainees have good opportunities to be directly involved in National Curriculum developments in schools, primarily through their subject departments, but also through whole-school developments in response to the changes, such as the emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Some trainees have had opportunities already to be involved in curriculum design and teaching because the schools where they are placed are already at the advanced stages of redesigning their curriculum offer. As a result, trainees and former trainees who are now newly qualified teachers are confident that they will be able to deliver the 2014 National Curriculum.
12. The partnership has developed its programme well to ensure all trainees, through centre- and school-based training, are well prepared for post-16 teaching. They all, for example, have a first- or second-school placement with post-16 education. All trainees are attached to a form group, which provides them with additional opportunities to engage directly with students about qualification and career options. Trainees attend options meetings for students and parents, and associated career events. They understand the importance of students having opportunities to study for a higher grade in GCSE English and mathematics post-16 if they have not gained these qualifications earlier. Trainees' knowledge of academic courses is generally better than that for vocational pathways and some have identified this as an area for

further development in which they are extending their experience on a second placement.

13. The general professional studies programme, which brings trainees together each Tuesday afternoon, is delivered by professionals with recognised expertise and offers trainees valuable knowledge and techniques which many bring directly into their teaching. The four assignments which trainees are required to complete similarly enable trainees to read about educational research materials, and require trainees to demonstrate that they have applied their studies in their own teaching. While students are directed to a range of resources, they do not always draw on the latest surveys of best practice, including Ofsted publications. There is at present no virtual learning environment to operate as a source of information and resource for trainees.
14. Trainees are offered extensive training in child protection and behaviour management, both in the general professional studies programme and through induction and training in their schools. As a result, most trainees manage behaviour well, and where this is not the case, they reflect accurately on how they can improve. Trainees show a good understanding of how to deal with bullying in a number of forms because of effective training, for example, in guarding against cyber-bullying. However, not all trainees across the partnership are aware of the stance they should take in their schools in dealing with homophobic bullying.
15. The general professional studies programme and a specific assignment on provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs ensures that trainees are well prepared to teach these students. In schools, trainees spend time with the special educational needs coordinator to develop an understanding of the nature of students' needs and strategies to be used in support of them. Trainees say they are well prepared to work with teaching assistants, although there were no opportunities to observe this during this inspection.
16. The partnership has responded well to the last inspection report in providing greater opportunities for trainees to understand how to teach students who speak English as an additional language. Former trainees who are newly qualified teachers spoke very positively about the impact of the day at an ethnically-diverse school outside the partnership and the requirement to develop teaching materials subsequent to this. The general professional studies programme gives further input on teaching English as an additional language.
17. As a partnership priority, trainees consistently plan to promote students' literacy in lessons across all subjects. This is done well in many cases, with trainees often observed working effectively to develop students'

confidence in speaking, as well as accuracy in writing. Opportunities to develop students' numeracy skills are less consistently planned; subject mentors recognise the need to develop this further as they plan the implementation of the new National Curriculum.

18. Mentoring is generally of a very high quality. The partnership has high expectations of its mentors, and carefully selects those with the capacity and interest to undertake the role. Mentors are thoroughly trained in partnership procedures and their roles. They value the very precise guidelines they are given by partnership leaders. As a result, the trainees' folders, and discussions with trainees themselves, suggest that there is a high degree of consistency in the quality of mentoring across the partnership. In response to the findings of the last inspection, the partnership began training its mentors to use coaching skills to ensure that they could help already highly competent trainees move to become outstanding. During this inspection, mentors were observed challenging trainees to reach the highest levels of which they are capable. Quality assurance of mentoring is rigorous. The course director and school coordinators regularly observe trainees and check their files to ensure progress is maintained. An external consultant regularly monitors the work of mentors and offers further support where required.
19. Those schools currently providing placements have been members of the partnership for many years, and school coordinators, mentors and other staff are well versed in its procedures and highly committed to its success. The second school placement is generally well designed to support a trainee's progress by directly addressing those aspects of weaker attainment or experience identified in the trainee's profiles. Trainees are often proactive in asking for specific additional experiences to be added to their training as part of the second placement. Five weeks long, the placement gives enough time for trainees to develop a substantial teaching portfolio in the second school, which most do very successfully. Exceptionally, a trainee's progress is slower where the aims of the second school placement are less clearly defined for the trainee and mentors.
20. Extensive training in the use of assessment criteria for mentors and coordinators, and thorough moderation of outcomes across the partnership, ensure the accuracy of assessments. Mentors and coordinators provide trainees with clear and precise written and verbal feedback following lesson observations which identify very clear developmental targets. Final assessments are verified through a small sample of trainees whose work is scrutinised by a university-based external moderator.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is good

21. Schools in the partnership have a strong interest in ensuring that the training programme produces the next generation of their teachers to a high calibre. For this reason, schools commit significant resources, including staff time and expertise, to making the programme a success. The partnership has responded with determination to the changing landscape of initial teacher education by successfully converting from employment-based initial teacher training to a school-centred initial teacher training programme. It has taken the next step forward by offering School Direct places in English, history and geography, and School Direct (salaried) places in mathematics, physics and chemistry for September 2014.
22. Operational and strategic leadership is provided by the partnership management group, comprised of the course director, school coordinators and external consultant. This tight-knit group ensures that executive decisions are taken quickly and collaboratively, and that the partnership can respond promptly to any concerns. Through this group, partner schools are involved in decisions about development of the training. At an operational level, communications across the partnership are good and the training is administered efficiently. Members of the management group play a key role in the detailed monitoring of the performance of trainees and the quality of training and assessment.
23. Current structures for strategic leadership and governance, however, do not provide sufficiently robust mechanisms for holding leaders to account for partnership performance. The governing body at the lead school, Thamesmead, monitors the financial health of the partnership but does not offer detailed enough scrutiny and challenge to its performance and outcomes. Headteachers at partner schools are not systematically engaged in strategic and operational matters. Partly as a consequence of weaknesses in higher-level scrutiny and accountability, partnership self-evaluation is often too informal; it especially lacks rigour in comparing the partnership's outcomes with sector norms and endeavouring to find detailed explanations for any shortcomings. The partnership's improvement plan therefore addresses important issues, but lacks specific enough actions and criteria for measuring success. Self-evaluation does, however, take good account of satisfaction surveys of trainees and former trainees in refining and developing aspects of the training programme.
24. The recruitment and selection process is thorough and rigorous in most respects. On open days, for example, the course leader is very transparent in setting out the demands of the programme. At interview,

candidates all have to teach a 20-minute lesson and students feed back their views on the quality of teaching to the interview panel. As a consequence, one mentor said of Thamesmead trainees: 'They arrive ready and eager to teach.' Nonetheless, year-on-year, some trainees withdraw before completing the course, often early in the training year. There has not been a sufficiently detailed investigation to identify patterns which could explain why this occurs. The partnership imposes few demands for trainees to gain teaching experience prior to interview and training; leaders acknowledge that there is potential for such experience to help some candidates to develop a better awareness of the demands of the job.

25. The partnership meets current statutory initial teacher training criteria, including that related to safeguarding. It has clear policies to promote equality and diversity, and eliminate discrimination, and has increased the proportion of males and trainees of minority ethnic heritages in recent years. However, arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of these policies need strengthening to ensure that outcomes, as well as recruitment data for such groups, are systematically analysed and evaluated.
26. Partnership leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve. In particular, the partnership has sustained good or better attainment and employability for trainees, and made clear improvements against the main issues of the last inspection. It is highly effective in monitoring and evaluating the progress of individual trainees, but arrangements to evaluate the performance of the partnership as a whole are not yet robust enough to result in outstanding overall effectiveness.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Thamesmead School

The Bishop Wand Church of England School

Fullbrook School

The Matthew Arnold School

Rydens Enterprise School and Sixth Form College

St Paul's Catholic College, Sunbury

ITE partnership details

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