

2Schools Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 24–27 March 2014

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

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The primary phase

Information about the primary partnership

- 2Schools Consortium is a partnership of two lead schools, Oakthorpe Primary in Enfield and Henry Maynard Primary in Waltham Forest, and 25 other schools, mainly in the same local authorities but increasingly from other local authorities in north and east London. The consortium has been training teachers since 2002 and in 2013 offered the School Direct (salaried) programme for the first time. At the time of the inspection, there were 38 primary trainees: seven trainees specialising in Early Years Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 and 27 trainees in Key Stages 1 and 2. In addition, Oakthorpe Primary as an accredited School-Centred Initial Teacher Training provider, had four trainees based in the school.

Information about the primary ITE inspection

- Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the two lead schools and three other primary schools to observe five trainees and four former trainees teaching either English or mathematics. All observations were carried out jointly with school-based mentors. Inspectors observed the giving of feedback and met with mentors, and current and former trainees to discuss the training. They also observed a training session at the centre and held in-depth interviews with two trainees about their training and progress. Inspectors met with link tutors, the two programme leaders, the headteachers of the two lead schools and of a school new to the partnership, and held telephone discussions with several others. They also looked at a wide range of documentation, including trainees' files and records of progress, course materials and minutes of management and moderation meetings.

Inspection team

Sonja Øyen Her Majesty's Inspector – lead inspector

Joy Frost Her Majesty's Inspector – assistant lead inspector

The key strengths of the primary partnership

- Its unblemished reputation in training reflective and skilful practitioners who are 'snapped up' by local schools, often within the partnership, stay in teaching and frequently go on to management positions.
- The stringent procedures which ensure the selection of highly suitable trainees who appreciate the rigours of teaching and are fully committed to meeting the partnership's high expectations of them.
- High-quality core training with clear links to school experience matched by very supportive mentoring in schools and by bespoke training plans, which ensure trainees get off to a really strong start and continue to make at least good progress in meeting the Teachers' Standards.
- The challenging assignments, such as high-quality presentations by trainees on aspects of special educational needs, which are rooted in effective school practice, trainees' research and critical evaluation of the impact of provision on pupils' achievement.
- The strong lead given by programme leaders in working with schools to build on the best of the Graduate Teacher Programme in a smooth transition to School Direct training, with innovative elements to improve the quality of outcomes and ensure continued professional development.
- The open, positive communication which ensures all within the partnership know exactly what is expected of them and that 'help is always at hand'.

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

The partnership should:

- share best practice in observing lessons, giving feedback and setting targets so that all trainees are crystal clear about the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning and know exactly what to do, especially in the second placement, to improve their effectiveness
- deepen trainees' knowledge of early education by ensuring that, early in the programme, all trainees a) use and apply their knowledge of how to teach phonics, and b) gain a practical understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, the principles that underlie it and national expectations regarding young children's development

- draw even more on specialist expertise within partnership schools to deliver key aspects of the core content, to plan action for improvement and to hold leaders, link tutors and mentors fully to account.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding.

1. Outcomes have improved since the last inspection. In each of the last two years half of the trainees were judged to be attaining at an outstanding level. There was no significant difference in outcomes between male and female trainees, or between those specialising in differing age phases. Current data indicate the potential for the proportion of trainees attaining at an outstanding level to be higher; halfway through the programme, very nearly all are judged to be at a good level in meeting most of the Teachers' Standards. In addition, roughly 40% are judged to be at a high level in meeting the Standard regarding the effective management of pupils' behaviour. Of the trainees who responded to the Ofsted online survey, 89% strongly agreed that the programme prepared them well in this area; this view was confirmed by inspectors' observations of the teaching by current and former trainees. A high level of agreement typified the responses to all questions in the survey, showing trainees' confidence in the training and in their own progress.
2. Trainees stay the course and withdrawals are rare. Last year, one trainee did not complete for personal reasons. The others all gained Qualified Teacher Status and employment, frequently within partnership schools. In many of the schools, including the two lead schools, a significant proportion of the teachers are former Consortium trainees. Some are now mentors or link tutors, and many others have gained management responsibilities, including headship. A key strength of the partnership is its success in meeting the needs of Enfield and Waltham Forest local authorities in training good teachers who remain within the locality and are influential in driving school improvement.
3. Headteachers and mentors are highly complimentary about the professionalism and expertise of current and former trainees, often referring to those in their first year of teaching as being typical of more experienced teachers. The comment that 'they are exactly what we want and need' was typical. A real strength is how well trainees conduct themselves professionally and personally. Trainees accept fully their role as an employee, immerse themselves in the life of the school, lead extra-curricular activities, and follow agreed policies and practices. They are proactive in seeking advice and developing their own learning. They reflect critically on their practice and are keen to excel. This was starkly

evident in the thought and care that trainees gave to the preparation and delivery of highly professional presentations to their peers and tutors on an aspect of special educational needs. The well-researched content was informative and thought-provoking.

4. Trainees' teaching in schools is very well planned and prepared, with resources and activities matched to pupils' needs. For example, the use of tablet computers and props ensured that pupils in the early stages of learning English were able to retell a traditional tale. Trainees showed a sound grasp of the next steps in pupils' learning, giving clear success criteria for the set activities and working cooperatively with other adults to ensure that pupils of all abilities were supported as needed. Occasionally, trainees missed opportunities to probe pupils' understanding and to scaffold the learning so that all pupils were clear about how to tackle the task.
5. The teaching of newly qualified teachers, who trained last year in the Graduate Teacher Programme, was found to be very effective over time. Common strengths were presence and confidence in the classroom, well-established routines, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate, and good-quality oral and written feedback to pupils.
6. In discussion, current and former trainees were confident in talking about the experiences needed to foster pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Current trainees showed an awareness of the value of a structured and systematic approach to the teaching of phonics and of its place in developing reading. However, halfway through the training, not all trainees, especially those working in Key Stage 2 classes, have had sufficient experience of planning and teaching phonics to ensure a pragmatic, secure grounding in how to teach early reading, or how to meet the reading needs of all pupils. Similarly, trainees' knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage varied. Some trainees have spent minimal time in Nursery/Reception classes, with little focus on the principles underlying the provision. As a result, their awareness is limited in how what they have seen relates to their pre-course review of parts of 'Development Matters', the government's non-statutory guidance document for early years educators.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding.

7. The trainees learn quickly and securely how to teach because the training is so well tailored to their needs. The initial needs analysis, self-assessment against the Teachers' Standards and subsequent drawing up of a training plan ensure that each trainee and his/her mentor have a clear picture of relevant experiences to promote rapid progress. Trainees value highly the immediate immersion in classroom life and the 'hands-on as-it-is learning' (a trainee's comment). All trainees begin by observing and working with groups of pupils, with some moving quickly

into teaching a class. At the time of the inspection, trainees were either in, or preparing for, a second placement in another key stage in a school offering a contrasting context, different local authority or with other ways of working. Although consultation between leaders, link tutors, mentors and trainees ensures this placement is tailored to individual needs, training plans are not always as explicit as they could be in identifying exactly what the trainee should gain from the placement.

8. High-quality mentoring is a strength of the training. Trainees benefit from focused advice from skilful mentors and subject leaders, and also from observing them in the classroom. Regular observation of trainees' teaching by mentors is supplemented by observation by senior leaders and link tutors. To date, trainees have received considerable feedback, often highly detailed, on their teaching in a range of subjects. However, the incisiveness of evaluation varies, especially in highlighting the impact of trainees' teaching on pupils' learning. The most effective feedback prompts the trainee to reflect critically and to identify points that will make a qualitative difference in the next lesson. Some records from observations focus too much on the structure of the lesson and its delivery with little on the subject content and how well it was learnt. The observation of trainees' teaching in the summer term, by lead subject tutors, offers a timely opportunity to clarify for trainees exactly what they need to do to attain at an outstanding level, especially in teaching reading, writing, mathematics and science.
9. The weekly meetings between trainees and mentors, and half termly reviews, are a key element in evaluating trainees' progress in meeting the Teachers' Standards and in setting personal targets. Targets agreed during this process are not always sharp enough to ensure trainees make optimal progress. The most effective identify the gap in trainees' performance in relation to an aspect of one of the Teachers' Standards and give specific expected outcomes.
10. All trainees benefit from the weekly sessions of core training. Mentors and headteachers comment on the value of these days not only for trainees but also for their schools, in that trainees return and share ideas and knowledge. Similarly, trainees share with their peers the content of professional development sessions and expected practice in their schools. This has proved particularly effective given the range of priorities for improvement in the schools and in local authorities. Given the increasing number of schools in the partnership, programme leaders are rightly looking to how best to share specialist expertise.
11. Trainees and schools are highly satisfied with the quality of training. Data from the provider's exit survey in 2013 and from the online Ofsted questionnaire show 100% agreement that the training is effective and will lead to employment. During this inspection, no issue was raised or

negative point made concerning the training and programme overall. Far from it, there was praise for 'inspiring training from experts and practitioners', especially in relation to mathematics and for sessions on assessment for learning. Core training sessions were described as being 'really helpful' with ideas to use in the classroom, explicit links to National Curriculum 2014, and to key reading and recent research or academic articles. Trainees commented on how trying out suggested ideas had given them confidence to take risks and to challenge pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in mathematics and in science.

12. The core training is developmental with an appropriate initial emphasis on communication, English, mathematics, science and managing pupils' behaviour. Content from the previous Graduate Teacher Programme has been tweaked to give greater emphasis to current national and local priorities and to include suggestions from last year's trainees and external moderator. An example is a new assignment based on narrowing gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils. Over the year, trainees are working with four pupils to improve their achievement in reading or writing and are evaluating the impact of the action they have taken. Discussion with trainees showed they were becoming increasingly skilled in assessing pupils' reading and writing, deciding the next steps in teaching and learning, and tracking pupils' progress. The three assignments are a valuable part of the training as they are rooted in trainees' practice and encourage critical reflection and academic research.

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

13. Strong leadership, shared vision and a commitment to improvement have been maintained since the inspection in 2009 despite several changes in personnel. The expertise in leading initial teacher education of the headteachers of the two lead schools, the high reputation of the partnership, and the sustained trust between schools and enthusiastic programme leaders have been key elements in the smooth transition to School Direct training. Headteachers and mentors praise highly the open communication, slick administration and quick response of link tutors and programme leaders. All are certain that issues will be dealt with promptly and effectively, and that their views are always considered.
14. Recruitment is strong with 10 candidates for every training place and an increase to above average in the proportion of successful male applicants. The School Direct salaried route has proved particularly popular with local headteachers seeking places for graduate teaching assistants who they have identified as being eminently suitable to move into teaching. Headteachers, echoed by current trainees, recognise the rigour of the selection process with challenging questions at interview

posed by programme and senior leaders from schools, a writing task, teaching time in school with reports from class-teachers, and all requirements met before an unconditional offer is given. As one trainee said, 'It was really tough. I feel honoured to have a place and am determined to meet the high standards that the leaders expect.'

15. The programme handbook outlines clearly what is expected of schools, mentors and trainees, including schools' and trainees' duties and responsibilities in relation to employment. The recent introduction of a weekly newsletter, being trialled among the Waltham Forest schools, is proving useful in reminding trainees and mentors of current events and in alerting them to helpful websites and recently published articles. The termly training for mentors is differentiated according to experience and expertise; those new to mentoring are benefiting from working with an experienced 'buddy' and from participating in workshops to share ideas and develop materials, such as guidance on lesson observations.
16. The findings from a chain of robust procedures to assure the quality of the programme form the basis for accurate self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Trainees' evaluations of training sessions, for example, have led to changes of focus. Link tutors oversee and moderate the work of the mentors with joint observations and reviews of trainees' progress. Their negotiations with schools on how best to support a trainee who may not be progressing as expected have enabled some trainees to overcome issues and complete their training at a good level. In reviewing mentors' and link tutors' written feedback to trainees, programme leaders identified the need for clearer targets and for stronger links between teaching and learning in feedback. They have introduced new guidance but acknowledge that, to date, not all mentors have implemented it to the degree expected. Programme leaders want the best for the trainees. By the end of this inspection, they had already refined the programme for 2014/15 in the light of points raised in discussions with inspectors.
17. The strategic plan for 2013 to 2016 sets out a clear vision for the partnership and also the rationale behind seeking validation to award the Postgraduate Certificate of Education. The current operational plan is guiding action but it does not reflect fully the range of issues identified from evaluations of the previous year's programme, nor make clear the expected impact for trainees of all actions. Although leaders use national data and reports to benchmark the quality of the provision, there is scope for finer analysis of trainees' performance and progress against the Teachers' Standards. Members of the Partnership and Strategic Boards discuss the impact of training and make reasoned decisions, but there is room to draw further on expertise from the schools to increase the robustness and extent of critical challenge in planning improvement.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Alma Primary
Eversley Primary
Henry Maynard Primary
Oakthorpe Primary
Roger Ascham Primary

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70178
Inspection number	156376
Inspection dates	24–27 March 2014
Lead inspector	Sonja Øyen Her Majesty's Inspector
Type of ITE partnership	School Direct (salaried) and SCITT
Phases provided	Primary
Date of previous inspection	June 2009
Previous inspection report	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70178
Provider address	Oakthorpe Primary School Tile Kiln Lane Palmers Green London N13 6BY