

# University of Northampton

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates Stage 1: 9–11 June 2014

Stage 2: 29 September–1 October 2014

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and additional inspectors in accordance with the *ITE Inspector Handbook*. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from June 2014.

The inspection draws upon evidence from each phase and separate route 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	ITE for FE
<b>Overall effectiveness</b> How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The outcomes for trainees	2	2
The quality of training across the partnership	2	2
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	2	2

## Overview of the ITE partnership

The overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership is good in both the primary and the FE phases. This is because good quality training and leadership enable primary trainees to exceed the minimum expectations of the Teachers' Standards. Likewise, trainees in the FE phase meet the professional standards for ITE in FE by the end of their training at a good level.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for trainees are good in both the primary and FE phases. Trainees are valued by employers, as demonstrated by high employment rates.
- Outcomes are good because trainees are trained well to teach in their chosen age phases. Trainees in both phases, for example, demonstrate the ability to evaluate their own teaching, and its impact on learning, well.
- The overall support for individual trainees is strong. This support continues when they take up teaching posts in schools or colleges.
- The overall quality of resources remains a strength.

### To improve the ITE partnership should:

- raise the attainment of trainees further in the primary phase
- in the FE phase:
  - ensure that all trainees are prepared well for the diversity of working in further education and experience the broadest range of effective teaching and learning strategies
  - improve further the rigour and impact of self-evaluation.

## Information about this ITE partnership

- The primary partnership comprises of nearly 300 schools in a range of settings.
- The further education (FE) partnership is with two colleges. Owing to external circumstances, the partnership will cease at the end of the 2014/15 academic year.
- The primary partnership offers a number of routes which, on successful completion, lead to qualified teacher status (QTS). These include three year Bachelor of Education (BA) degrees, postgraduate certificates of education and training through School Direct. Trainees specialise in either early years or primary education.
- Further education trainees follow a part-time, in-service, two-year initial teacher education course for the learning and skills sector.

## **The primary phase**

### **Information about the primary partnership**

- The primary partnership of the University of Northampton comprises of nearly 300 schools in several local authority areas. The schools are largely local authority maintained but also include independent schools and academies. These schools are situated in a variety of rural and urban settings.
- The primary partnership provides a number of routes into teaching. Trainees following the BA route undertake a three-year period of training. Those following the postgraduate certificate course train for one year. At the time of stage one of this inspection trainee numbers were as follows:
  - BA in Early Years Education, 63 trainees
  - BA Primary, 324 trainees
  - Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Education, 29 trainees
  - Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Education, 97 trainees.
- A smaller number of trainees follow the School Direct route. Fifty-two trainees were on such courses at stage one of this inspection, nine following an early years programme with the remainder on a primary programme.
- On successful completion of their training, trainees attain qualified teacher status (QTS).

### **Information about the primary ITE inspection**

- There were five inspectors on the primary team for each of the two stages of the inspection.
- During stage one inspectors visited 11 schools. Inspectors observed the teaching of 21 trainees representing all programmes. It was not possible to observe final year undergraduates teach because they had already completed their training. Discussions were held with the trainees and with school-based mentors. Discussions were also held with a further 26 trainees, either in schools or at the university. A university-based training session was also observed. Inspectors took into account the findings from recent newly-qualified teacher (NQT) surveys and the 115 responses from trainees to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire. Of the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, 80 were from those on the postgraduate programmes and 35 were from those following School Direct.
- During stage two of the inspection inspectors visited ten schools, including one visited in stage one. The teaching of 15 NQTs was observed. Each of these NQTs had completed their training in the

summer of 2014. A discussion was held with a further NQT and with groups of children and pupils taught by each of the NQTs observed.

- In both stages of the inspection, inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including work in pupils' books and trainees' files. In addition, discussions were also held with university and school-based leaders and trainers. Furthermore, a wide range of documentary evidence provided by the partnership was considered by inspectors. This included information relating to trainees' attainment. The partnership's website was reviewed.

### **Inspection team**

Mark Williams HMI	Lead inspector
Joanne Olsson HMI	Assistant lead inspector
Carole Baker (Stage One)	Team inspector
Davinder Dosanjh	Team inspector
Sandra Hayes HMI (Stage Two)	Team inspector
Juliet Ward	Team inspector

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade: 2**

### **The key strengths of the primary partnership are:**

- The quality of the university-based training in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and early reading is at least good. Consequently, the training is ensuring trainees are planning and teaching early reading increasingly well to secure better outcomes for pupils.
- The overall quality of training is good. The university-based training is particularly strong. As a result, trainees are increasingly aware of, and able to respond to, the different needs of pupils and contexts in which they find themselves. Trainees are also prepared well to teach the early years or national curriculum and prepare their pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The quality of training is enhanced by the excellent resources at the university. These are used to promote good learning for pupils.
- The coherence between school and university-based training is strong. As a result, the promotion of knowledge, skills and understanding throughout the programmes is enabling trainees to hit the ground running when they begin placements or take up teaching posts.
- Trainees and NQTs are held in high regard by schools. They are able to evaluate their own teaching and its impact on learning effectively. As a result of this high regard, employment rates are high.
- The overall support for trainees, including bespoke support for those who, for whatever reason, experience difficulties, is rightly viewed very

positively by trainees, NQTs and schools. Consequently, completion rates are improving well. They are also improving because the 'Support for Men' programme is helping to keep male trainees in the training.

- As a result of mostly accurate self-evaluation, partnership leaders are aware of weaker elements and have taken swift action to tackle these issues. While it is too soon to see the impact of some of these actions, in other areas it is clear. Outcomes for trainees, for example their attainment, are good and improving over time.

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

#### **The partnership should:**

- To raise the attainment of trainees further, ensure:
  - the improvements undertaken to strengthen the quality of mentoring, so that all is at least good, are applied consistently across the partnership
  - that all feedback and target setting, including that by school-based mentors, sharply identify trainees' strengths and what they should do next to improve, particularly in mathematics teaching
  - the mechanisms for assessing trainees, at the end of school experiences and at the end of training, including how final grades are arrived at, are understood by all who contribute to this process
  - the evidence to support the case for trainees exceeding the Teachers' Standards at the highest level is robust.

### **Inspection Judgements**

1. The overall effectiveness of the primary ITE partnership at the University of Northampton is good. This means trainees, on whatever training course they have followed, are prepared well to teach in their chosen phase. This view is shared by schools, as demonstrated by high employment rates.
2. Trainees at this partnership display a number of key attributes. For example, they are able to evaluate their own teaching and its impact on the learning of their pupils. Increasingly, they are able to do this during lessons, thereby meeting the needs of their pupils well. A number of trainees and NQTs, for example, rephrased the questions they asked of pupils. This helped pupils who were struggling to make better progress in their learning. Trainees and NQTs who did this routinely were also posing more challenging questions to more able pupils.
3. The attainment of trainees is therefore good. All who gained QTS in both 2013 and 2014 exceeded the Teachers' Standards, some at the highest

level. Inspectors found no significant differences between groups of trainees or programmes. Inspectors, though, were not always convinced by the evidence presented for all who were assessed at the highest level. On occasions, the judgements contained in ongoing records of trainees' progress completed by school-based mentors and university tutors were too generous. This is because they describe what the trainees have done and do not always link this to how effectively the trainees' pupils make gains in their learning. On occasions there is also a lack of clarity about what is meant by the highest level of attainment at the end of one school placement compared with another. Partnership leaders, already aware of this, have taken steps to remedy this, although it is too soon to see the impact of measures taken.

4. Trainees attain well and show the potential to be at least good teachers because the quality of training is good. Particularly strong training at the university is complemented well by good experiences in a range of partnership schools. All involved in the training show high levels of commitment. Consequently, there is good coherence between trainees' school- and university-based experiences. As a result, the promotion of knowledge, skills and understanding, throughout the training, is enabling trainees to hit the ground running when they begin placements or start as an NQT.
5. School leaders, trainees and NQTs, rightly in inspectors' views, praised the help given by the partnership, and particularly so for those trainees with difficult circumstances. This is one reason why completion rates, broadly in line with national rates overall, are improving well. Another reason is that the 'Support for Men' programme is helping to keep male trainees in the training.
6. Trainees are prepared well to teach the early years and national curriculum depending on their training route. The specialisms on the BA courses and contributions of external partners such as Stonewall are ensuring trainees are increasingly able to respond to the different needs of pupils and the contexts in which they find themselves. Trainees' understanding of the need to nurture tolerance and respect in their pupils shows they are preparing them for life in modern Britain well. Partnership leaders, eager to improve training even further, have strengthened input into areas such as, for example, personal, social and health education on the postgraduate courses for 2014/15.
7. Excellent mentoring was observed during stage one of the inspection. Where it was of high quality, trainees were making very good progress, sometimes after experiencing difficulties. Excellent and prompt levels of support for trainees experiencing difficulty, particularly from university-based colleagues, enable them to, in the main, complete school placements and the course.

8. Leaders have an acute awareness of the partnership's strengths and weaknesses. For example, leaders had already identified some inconsistency in the quality of school-based mentoring. These inconsistencies lie around the evidence collected to support assessments of trainees' progress and attainment. When setting targets, school-based mentors and, on occasions, university-based tutors, do not always make clear what trainees must do to improve.
9. Trainees benefit from at least good training in phonics and early reading. As a result, trainees and NQTs are planning and teaching this aspect increasingly well to secure better outcomes for their pupils. The focused training at the university is enhanced by two features in particular. The first is the well-structured prompts on records of trainees' teaching. These have been instrumental in helping tutors, mentors and trainees focus on what teaching and learning have been successful and what have been less so. As a result, both trainers and trainees have a clear indication of the next steps trainees need to take to secure improvements. The second feature is the flexibility shown by the partnership schools in allowing trainees to teach these key skills across year groups.
10. Training in mathematics is of good quality overall. It is strongest at the university where a sharp focus by leaders to bring about improvement is paying dividends. Trainees' mathematics subject knowledge is checked regularly. Where weaknesses are identified, support is given and improvements brought about. On some occasions, though, school-based mentors do not set sharp enough targets to help trainees to improve their subject knowledge or teaching of mathematics over time.
11. Trainees' promotion of good behaviour and positive attitudes for learning overall is also good. They have been trained well to spot different types of bullying and know how to deal with them should they arise. They can also identify the reasons why behaviour may not be as good as it should be; they also know that good teaching more often than not leads to well-behaved pupils. For example one NQT, building on her training, ensured her classroom was a haven for excellent attitudes and behaviour. On entering her classroom inspectors were greeted by a calm, purposeful atmosphere in which all pupils were engrossed in their learning. Soothing background music, clear and challenging questioning and prompting, and engaging activities enabled the pupils to write interesting sentences using present and past tense verbs and identify features from different types of newspaper report. Throughout this lesson inspectors noted low-level chatter; it was of no concern, though, because it was all focused on learning as pupils eagerly shared their work with each other.

12. Trainees and NQTs, because they have been trained well, display a good overall awareness of inclusion, including that of pupils with special educational needs and the more able. Overall, they are adapting their teaching to meet the needs of different groups and to support effective working with teaching assistants, thereby enabling their pupils to make at least expected progress in their learning. On occasions, though, all pupils, regardless of ability or need, do the same work, which means for some it is either too hard or too easy.
13. Trainees benefit from access to excellent resources at the university. Trainees were particularly complimentary about the resources for phonics and early reading. As a result, trainees and NQTs use an interesting range of resources well in their teaching to promote good learning. They amend resources, as required, to take into account the different needs of pupils; for example, those who are dyslexic. Technology, for example interactive whiteboards to highlight capital cities and rivers of the United Kingdom, is used well. Importantly, trainees have a 'Plan B' for when technology fails.
14. At the conclusion of their training, accurate and detailed information is provided to schools to support the induction and continuing professional development of trainees as they become NQTs; however, a very few NQTs reported that targets arrived late. In addition, some targets require sharpening to make clear to schools exactly what knowledge, skill or understanding needs to be developed.
15. The leadership of the partnership is good. Teams and individuals, from school-based members of the partnership steering group to the course leaders and the partnership school manager, all work well together. Schools are confident about the partnership and their role in it, as demonstrated by the high employment rates. School leaders, particularly those engaged with School Direct, report how the rigour of recruitment and selection processes has improved because they are more involved. Inspectors agree with the provider that trainees are on the right courses according to their needs, skills and experience.
16. Partnership leaders have a clear vision for excellence. Expectations are high. Leaders' clear understanding of the partnership's strengths and areas for improvement stem from the robust ongoing monitoring, open and honest self-evaluation and the appropriateness of action planning. Leaders, for example, have acted with urgency following some less than positive outcomes following surveys and questionnaires. As a result, improvements have been made to the organisation of school placements so that trainees no longer find out about these late in the day. Significant work has also been undertaken to improve the consistency of school-based mentoring so that it is always as good as the very best in the partnership. Revisions, for example to paperwork and recording



mechanisms, have been put into place. These have the intention of making clear to all who are involved in the assessment of trainees how grades, including final grades, are arrived at. Because no trainees were on school placement at the time of stage two of the inspection, inspectors were unable to verify the effectiveness of these revised arrangements. Nevertheless, inspectors are of the view that such swift responses demonstrate strong capacity to improve further.

17. The partnership is compliant with ITT criteria and requirements.

## **Annex: Partnership schools**

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' and NQT's teaching:

Abington Vale Primary School, Northampton  
Boothville Primary School, Northampton  
Bozeat Primary School, Northampton  
Bridgewater Primary School, Northampton  
Cedar Road Primary School, Northampton  
Eastfield Academy, Northampton  
Hackleton CE Primary School, Hackleton  
Hopping Hill Primary, Northampton  
Moulton Primary School, Northampton  
Preston Hedges Primary, Northampton  
Roade Primary School, Northampton  
Ruskin Infant School, Wellingborough  
St James CE Primary School, Northampton  
Simon de Senlis Primary School, Northampton  
The Avenue Infant School, Wellingborough  
Weedon Bec Primary, Weedon  
Whitehills Primary, Northampton  
Wollaston Community Primary School, Wellingborough  
Woodnewton – A learning Community, Corby  
Yelvertoft Primary School, Northampton

## **Initial teacher education for the further education system**

### **Information about the FE in ITE partnership**

- The university works in partnership with two local further education colleges: Northampton College, a general further education college, and Moulton College, which specialises in land-based provision. The partnership provides part-time, in-service, two-year initial teacher education courses for the learning and skills sector. The training is overseen by the university and delivered at the colleges. The vast majority of trainees are employed by the partner colleges, with a small number at external providers. Routes are provided for both graduates and non-graduates.
- At the time of Stage 1 of the inspection 26 trainees were on the course.
- The university and the colleges have decided to end the partnership once the current cohort of trainees completes in 2015.

### **Information about the FE in ITE inspection**

- During stage 1 of the inspection three inspectors visited both of the partner colleges and held detailed discussions with individual trainees and groups of former trainees. As nearly all of the training had been completed only two trainees were observed teaching. Inspectors scrutinised trainees' portfolios, and interviewed several mentors. Detailed discussions were held with the programme leaders at the university and in the colleges.
- During stage 2 of the inspection, inspectors observed eight former trainees teach and held detailed discussions with each of them and most of their mentors or heads of department. They also reviewed with programme leaders the progress made since stage 1 of the inspection. In both stages, inspectors scrutinised a wide range of course documentation and electronic resources.

### **Inspection Team**

Alan Hinchliffe HMI  
William Baidoe-Ansah HMI  
Kathleen Brown

Lead inspector  
Assistant lead inspector  
Team inspector

**The key strengths of the FE partnership are:**

- trainees make good progress in attaining the professional standards for further education teachers, and by the time they are qualified they are good or better teachers who promote high standards
- the proportion of trainees who complete the training successfully has risen, and the large majority sustain or increase their employment at the partner colleges or at other external providers, including schools
- the partner colleges, supported well by the university, use knowledgeable trainers and effective mentoring to provide high-quality training that helps trainees to make good progress and become thoughtful, reflective practitioners
- the effectiveness of the training in ensuring that newly-qualified teachers have a good understanding of the need to help their students to improve their English and mathematics. They also have a sound grasp of other key priorities in teaching in the lifelong learning sector
- the extensive pastoral and academic support that the partnership gives to individual trainees continues as they embark on their careers as newly-qualified teachers
- the high quality of resources throughout the training that help trainees to learn and also model good practice for their own teaching
- the very good collaborative work between the university and the partner colleges that has led to improvements in the quality of training and outcomes for trainees.

**What does the FE partnership need to do to improve further?****The partnership should:**

- ensure that all trainees benefit from having a breadth of teaching experience, and are involved in the broader aspects of college life, so that they are prepared well for the diversity of working in further education
- give trainees more opportunities to observe good and outstanding practice, both in their own subjects and in other curriculum areas, to give them an insight into the broadest range of effective teaching and learning strategies
- improve the rigour and impact of self-evaluation further by making better use of agreed data, across the partnership, to assess performance. Develop more effective ways to capture and act upon trainees' views of the training.

## Inspection Judgements

18. The partnership is increasingly effective in supporting trainees to complete the training successfully and ensuring that they embark on their careers as good or better teachers. A small number of trainees who start the course fail to complete it, due to a combination of the fragility of employment in the further education sector and the personal circumstances of some trainees. Partnership leaders do all they can to support trainees to complete their studies. Records of the reasons for any withdrawals or suspensions are comprehensive. On completion of the course, the vast majority of trainees sustain or increase their employment, in some cases being promoted. Trainees from different social groups make equally good progress. Most trainees continue to work at the partner colleges; a small number gain employment at other providers, including schools.
19. Trainees make good progress in meeting the professional standards for further education teachers as a consequence of the high-quality training. They grow in self-confidence and develop an astute understanding of the key attributes of successful teachers. Trainees have secure subject or vocational knowledge, promote high standards to their students, and demonstrate appropriate professional standards in their workplaces.
20. Trainees, and newly-qualified teachers, develop a good repertoire of teaching techniques that they deploy flexibly, depending on the needs of different groups of students, and most are adept at teaching students at different levels of study. They demonstrate the ability to reflect carefully upon their lessons and evaluate the impact of the techniques they have used on students' learning. In the small proportion of less successful teaching observed by inspectors, teachers could articulate precisely the weaknesses of the lesson and what they could do to improve it.
21. Trainees and former trainees understand the diverse needs of their learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and take account of these, both in their detailed planning and in their teaching. Although several trainees reported that they would have liked a stronger focus on classroom management techniques in the training, inspectors found that trainees and newly-qualified teachers were skilful in ensuring that all students were focused on learning. Most trainees and teachers use information and learning technology well, and on occasion innovatively, to capture students' interest and broaden the range of resources used for effective learning. They have a sound grasp of assessment techniques and apply these well to their teaching groups.
22. The standard of trainees' written work and academic understanding is variable, reflecting their different backgrounds, but nearly all trainees

make good progress from their starting points. Most trainees recognise the benefits of a theoretical underpinning to their pedagogy, and many are adept at linking theory to practice. Trainees benefit from conducting an action research assignment during their training, with several carrying out creative and interesting pieces of research. They also benefit from the high academic standards promoted by the involvement of the university in the partnership. College trainers are successful in upholding these standards.

23. Training is effective in inculcating trainees and former trainees with a good understanding of the key national priorities in further education teaching. Teachers are adept at applying this understanding in their lessons. For example, a strong focus on helping students to improve their English and mathematics is evident in trainees' and former trainees' teaching. Teachers reinforce their students' accurate use of written English particularly effectively, although they do not always do enough to help their students to improve their oracy. Opportunities to encourage students to improve their arithmetic are exploited frequently. Newly-qualified teachers understand the principles of study programmes and the importance of preparing students for employment. They also show a good grasp of current debates around helping students to understand the diversity of modern Britain, and demonstrate a willingness to challenge students' stereotypical portrayals of different groups.
24. Trainees benefit from very effective mentoring, both during the course and subsequently in the colleges. Mentors are selected carefully, and are expert practitioners themselves. Mentors devote considerable time to their mentees, guiding them to improve their subject-specific knowledge and resources for their teaching, as well as their understanding of, and involvement in, broader aspects of college life. However, a small number of trainees with part-time teaching contracts at the colleges did not receive sufficient breadth of experience during their training as a result of teaching too few groups or too narrow a range of courses. In a few instances, these trainees' experience was confined to teaching their classes and they had little opportunity to enrich their experience through involvement in other aspects of college life.
25. The design of the training programme, coupled with the expertise of the trainers in the colleges, means that trainees receive a coherent and comprehensive package of training that covers all the key components of the professional standards for further education teachers. Trainers model good practice in teaching. The wide variety of high-quality paper-based and electronic resources are used well by trainees to accelerate their learning. These resources also provide valuable templates for trainees' own production of resources to use with their students.

26. Trainers, mentors, and the university programme leader use observations of trainees' teaching effectively to promote dialogue with trainees about their progress. Their evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of trainees' lessons are accurate. Judicious modifications have been made to the teaching observation paperwork to make it more accessible, to focus judgements more explicitly on the impact of trainees' teaching on students' progress, and to relate judgements to the new professional standards. Although trainees do benefit from watching others, particularly their mentors, teach, they do not have sufficient opportunities to observe best practice both within and outside their own subject areas. Each trainee's progress across all aspects of the course is monitored very carefully by the training team. Clear developmental targets are agreed with trainees, although in a minority of instances these are not followed through sufficiently rigorously.
27. The high quality of training is complemented by the extensive support given to trainees throughout the programme. This support usually continues for newly-qualified teachers. Many of the trainees face significant, but not insuperable, barriers to completing training successfully and to a high standard. Trainers are adept at minimising the obstacles so that all trainees can achieve their potential. For example, support for those who need help with study skills, or for those with demanding family responsibilities, is very effective. A recent initiative to create an online community for all those involved in the training to exchange ideas and lend mutual support has got off to a promising start.
28. The collaboration between the university and the colleges in working together to produce high-quality outcomes for trainees is very good. This is a close-knit partnership, with frequent and effective communications between all parties. Partnership leaders are appropriately self-critical. In recent years they have made significant improvements to the programme and ensured that all aspects of the training reflect current practice and priorities in the further education sector. The overall self-evaluation document for the partnership lacks precision in key respects, and focuses too much on describing provision rather than evaluating it. At a whole partnership level, the use of data to evaluate the progress that trainees make is weak. Arrangements for collecting, evaluating and acting upon trainees' views of the training, although in place, are not sufficiently effective, and the partnership has not yet found a way of engaging employed trainees more systematically in self-evaluation. Despite these weaknesses, leaders and managers have been effective in reviewing the training programme, diagnosing accurately its strengths and areas for improvement, and working together to improve provision for trainees. The decision to cease the partnership in 2015 is a product of external circumstances, reduced

demand and financial imperatives, and not an expression of dissatisfaction from any of the partners involved.

## **Annex: Partnership colleges**

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Northampton College

Moulton College

## ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70050
Inspection number	434216
Inspection dates Stage 1	9-11 June 2014
Stage 2	29 September–1 October 2014
Lead inspector	Mark Williams HMI
Type of ITE partnership	HEI-led partnership
Phases provided	Primary QTS and ITE for FE
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2012
Previous inspection report	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70050">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70050</a>
Provider address	Park Campus Boughton Green Road Northampton NN2 7AL



