

Wessex Schools Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 30 June–1 July 2014
Stage 2: 20–22 October 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 June 2014.

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 |

The secondary phase

Information about the secondary partnership

- The Wessex Schools' Training Partnership was previously an employment-based initial teacher training provider. It converted successfully in April 2014 to a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) partnership, delivering school direct programmes to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for graduate trainees who wish to teach students in the 11–16 age range.
- The partnership has traditionally run its training programmes for a year from each April. At the time of Stage 1 of the inspection, eight trainees were being trained in the April 2014 cohort, with six following school direct routes and two on a school direct (salaried) programme. The school direct and school direct (salaried) programmes are very similar in structure.
- The partnership has now changed its training period to run for a year from each September. In September 2014, a further 11 trainees started training, with eight on the school direct route and three on the school direct (salaried) programme. These trainees will work towards a Postgraduate Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) alongside QTS.
- The current total of 19 trainees is larger than at the time of the previous inspection, and reflects the partnership's steady expansion. Trainees are trained across a broad range of subject specialisms, which currently include English, mathematics, art, computer science, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education. Typically, there are one or two trainees per subject, with slightly larger numbers in mathematics.
- The number of schools in the partnership has expanded since the previous inspection. Four schools currently offer main placements, and a further five have provided second school placements to current trainees. The schools are mainly located in Poole, though a small number are further afield in south Dorset. The schools include comprehensive schools and academies, single-sex grammar schools and an independent school. The lead school is Poole High School, where a specialist teaching centre and much of the central training is based.
- The partnership is governed by a partnership board comprising the chair, partnership director, and representatives of the placement schools. It is led by a course director who is also a teacher and leader at a partner school. The director reports back to the headteacher of the lead school on a monthly basis and attends the Poole headteachers meeting once a year in June.

Information about the secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons taught by seven trainees, and five by newly qualified teachers (NQTs), in six schools. All observations of trainees were undertaken jointly with mentors or school-based partnership representatives.
- Inspectors also held discussions with: 10 trainees from the September 2014 cohort; newly qualified teachers working in non-partnership schools; partnership visiting tutors; leaders, managers and headteachers; and school-based staff, including mentors and partnership representatives.
- 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; and, surveys of the views of trainees and newly qualified teachers.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Her Majesty's Inspector: lead inspector

Dr John Menendez, additional inspector: assistant lead inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the secondary partnership are:

- Through the strong commitment of the partnership leaders and effective governance structures, the newly converted SCITT has developed a clear vision for future development and momentum for the journey ahead, responding well to local needs.
- The very high employment rates of trainees ensure a regular supply of at least two-thirds of each qualifying cohort to local schools, swift progression in their early careers to middle management positions, and high numbers retained in teaching.

- Recruitment and selection are rigorous and effective in producing cohorts with the potential to be good or better teachers, and this in turn supports good and improved completion rates.
- The training is well focused on developing trainees' subject knowledge, and on understanding how to develop students' literacy skills through their specialist subjects.
- Trainees and NQTs manage their classes and students' behaviour well; they plan well-paced and engaging lessons and evaluate their own teaching carefully in terms of its impact on students' learning.
- Trainees are very reflective and have high expectations of their own performance; they display high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Most trainees feel very well supported in their training programme, through a strong central training programme, the expert advice they receive from their mentors and tutors, and the effective pastoral care for their well-being and progress.

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

The partnership should:

- Raise trainees' attainment further so that more are outstanding by the end of the training, particularly by:
 - providing clear leadership to ensure that throughout the training, the targets set for trainees give consistently clear, detailed and specific guidance on how they should improve their teaching and subject pedagogy
 - developing trainees' skills in matching tasks to students' capabilities to ensure that all groups of students make best progress.
- Develop further a culture of continual improvement across the whole partnership by:
 - ensuring that across the partnership the quality of mentoring matches that of the best, in the effectiveness and timeliness of support and guidance given to trainees
 - refining the partnership agreement and further strengthening communications between trainees, schools and partnership leaders

- continuing to develop the partnership to ensure that trainees have experience in schools in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Inspection judgements

1. The partnership has an excellent track record in ensuring that its trainees are successfully employed as teachers. Over the last three years, all trainees have secured teaching posts on completing their training, and nearly all have remained in teaching. Most are employed in the Bournemouth and Poole area and the large majority in partnership schools. The partnership therefore makes a key contribution to improving the supply of teachers for schools in the locality, including in shortage subjects such as mathematics, English, chemistry and modern foreign languages. In some cases, NQTs move swiftly to take middle leadership responsibilities in their schools. One NQT who finished training in April 2014 has already become interim head of a large department in a local school.
2. These very high employment rates reflect well on trainees' high standards of personal and professional conduct. Trainees show full commitment to promoting positively the ethos and values of their schools, and all have a high regard for the well-being of the students they teach. A high level of mutual professional respect prevails between trainees and mentors. Mentors are quick to praise the additional specialist knowledge and skills that many trainees bring to their departments.
3. Completion rates compare favourably with the national average. All trainees who started the course in 2013 completed it successfully. In the three years prior to this, one trainee withdrew in each year for personal or career reasons. These good completion rates are testament to the effectiveness and rigour of the recruitment and selection process. The selection process features searching tests of subject knowledge, initiative, resilience, and interaction with students or teaching during the process. It is recommended that trainees have acquired significant school experience prior to application. As a result, trainees present as confident, resilient professionals, ready to work hard and make a positive contribution to many aspects of the life of the school. Trainees speak warmly of the pastoral support provided by the course administrator and director, who respond readily to their concerns.
4. Recruitment and selection procedures have changed recently to accommodate new national procedures for applying for training. It is too early to judge the impact of such changes.

5. Trainees' attainment has improved steadily since the previous inspection. The proportion of trainees judged good or better by the end of the training has improved sharply. In 2013/14, all were judged good or better. Over time around a third of trainees have been judged outstanding, and this rose to two-fifths in 2013/14. Rates of progress for the current cohort of April starters match these attainment levels. Internal and external moderation procedures for the assessment of trainees' outcomes are robust and inspectors agreed in most cases with the partnership's assessment of the quality of trainees and NQTs.
6. Training is good and supports trainees in making good progress against the Teachers' Standards. In particular, trainees value the extensive training they receive in techniques for the management of behaviour, both from central training programmes and school-based guidance from colleagues and mentors. As a result, trainees and NQTs generally manage their classes well. They recognise that if pupils are learning well they generally behave well too; so they plan well-paced lessons with engaging activities that enable pupils to achieve clear learning objectives. Where they need to intervene to address distractive behaviour, most trainees successfully apply school behaviour policies firmly and consistently. Trainees have a very well-developed awareness of different kinds of bullying and actions they should take to prevent it. They receive a comprehensive induction to safeguarding and demonstrate a good awareness of how they apply this in their schools.
7. Trainees are well qualified on entry by comparison with other partnerships. Their confidence in planning and teaching well-structured lessons is partly rooted in well-developed subject knowledge. A comprehensive subject knowledge audit is undertaken prior to the start of training and kept under review by trainees and mentors at key points through the programme. In the 2014/15 programme, subject tutorials have been developed significantly and successfully. This is a result of a partnership development plan priority in response to some negative feedback on subject tutoring in the previous year. Subject tutorials have a sharper structure and now occur each week on placement for an hour session with an experienced teacher. Trainees now report very favourably on how these sessions are providing them with very good opportunities to work with experienced teachers on key aspects of their practice and subject pedagogy. Those who are training to teach outside their specific degree specialism, particularly in mathematics, invariably have a well-developed background in their teaching subject and undertake appropriate and effective subject knowledge enhancement programmes.
8. Training places much emphasis on developing trainees' understanding of curriculum and assessment frameworks, so that trainees have to complete primary school national tests and GCSE and A-level papers as

part of their experience. Trainees and NQTs have good opportunities to experience teaching and learning in the sixth forms of partnership schools, but the understanding of the range of post-16 academic and vocational pathways and study programmes is underdeveloped for many. As a result of this finding in Stage 1 of the inspection, the plan for the current training programme has been strengthened in this regard. Trainees have a sound understanding and experience of primary school structures and curricula.

9. The comprehensive literacy training, including in phonics, that trainees receive in their central programme is well deployed in classrooms. Trainees' and NQTs' lesson preparation often gives much attention to the promotion of literacy, especially for students with weak literacy. Much focus is given to supporting students' use of subject-specific and technical vocabulary. Trainees' skills in supporting students' numeracy through their subject are less well developed.
10. Trainees' files show a strong commitment to keeping up to date with the latest research and developments in their subjects and general educational matters, for example through references to recent Ofsted reports and research papers from subject associations. The training programme is well designed to ensure that trainees' practice is continually informed and developed by such work. Weekly 'focus tasks' ensure that trainees apply their learning from central training sessions directly to their teaching and pastoral work with their students. In addition, two assignments are essentially action research projects, based on applying trainees' studies of assessment for learning and personal, learning and thinking skills to improvements in their current practice.
11. Trainees have a high regard for the very effective training they receive in teaching students who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Lessons of trainees and NQTs are planned carefully to ensure that tasks and approaches are adapted well to support the learning of these students, including through the planned deployment of other adults. The partnership's standard lesson planning format helps by prompting trainees to think about differentiating each task to meet students' needs. Training to support students for whom English is an additional language is less favourably regarded by trainees; trainees are generally less confident in designing specific strategies to help these students overcome language barriers. Trainees have a good understanding of the barriers to learning and progress faced by students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds as a result of a strong focus within central training and priorities in schools across the partnership. Trainees recognise the need to monitor gaps in progress for disadvantaged students and understand actions that can be taken to close these.

12. Trainees are aware of the need to ensure that more able students receive sufficiently challenging work. However, not all trainees and NQTs are sufficiently adept at understanding how to extend the skills and deepen the understanding of more able students. The focus of centre- and school-based training on differentiating challenge for students comes towards the end of the programme; it is recognised by trainees and increasingly by partnership leaders that this is too late to support consistently good or better teaching and needs to be addressed earlier. Nonetheless, some very good examples were seen among trainees and NQTs of planning to allow more able students to start on higher-level work than their peers and make strong progress.
13. Trainees use assessment information well to monitor their students' progress and inform their planning. Their questioning of students is consistently effective in encouraging students across the ability range to participate in whole-class discussions and to develop and extend their answers. The effectiveness of marking in ensuring that students are always making best progress is more variable, especially for current trainees mid-way through training. Nonetheless, some outstanding examples were seen among NQTs of identifying what went well in students' work, setting out what they need to improve and ensuring students responded.
14. Trainees generally have a high regard for the support and guidance they receive from their mentors and their colleagues in schools. The feedback they receive following lessons is accurate and often contains very useful practical tips from mentors with a strong working knowledge of the school and the students. The written targets for trainees' improvement, however, are often too generic and lack specific detail on the precise aspects of a trainee's practice or subject pedagogy that needs improvement. As a consequence, some trainees go for many weeks with similar generic targets arising from observations. Trainees' final summative reports and targets at the end of placements and at the end of their training are similarly often too general. Excessive use of statement banks to generate these reports makes it difficult to distinguish, for example, between good and outstanding trainees, and lessens their value to employers. Nonetheless, throughout their training the trainees themselves are highly reflective on their own effectiveness, and NQTs are very clear about their further professional targets as they begin their careers. The training programme promotes such self evaluation well. For example, in the 'monitoring and accountability' exercise on their main placement, trainees explicitly evaluate their own performance by reference to the progress data of students in their classes.
15. While the quality of mentoring is mostly very effective, especially on the main placements, there are a few instances where such standards are

not met, particularly in the regularity and quality of mentor meetings with trainees. The role of the visiting tutor is mostly effective in providing monitoring and support for trainees and mentors, especially now that it has been strengthened to allow more detailed discussions with all parties during visits. There remains some difference in perception between visiting tutors, however, in the extent to which they can report on aspects of the quality of training and mentoring in the placement. Throughout the programme, training and development opportunities are provided for mentors, although not all attend regularly. The course director follows up non-attenders with an individual briefing meeting at the start of the training year. The partnership representatives in the schools also provide additional support for mentors on a needs-led basis. The central team of administrator and course director maintain regular communications with partner schools and mentors, including useful weekly briefings to keep all on track towards programme completion. However, the lack of a dedicated virtual learning environment or information portal makes it difficult to ensure that all mentors are working with latest versions of forms and guidance. The partnership agreement with schools is currently being refined following Stage 1 of the inspection: it is not in all places sufficiently clear about the expected commitment of mentors and representatives to engage and communicate with the central administration.

16. The steady growth in the partnership has enabled trainees to experience an increasing diversity of settings as part of their training. The expansion to include an increasing number of schools in more diverse socio-economic contexts, and new academies with a particular focus on raising standards, has given added breadth. The small size of the partnership, however, continues to impose constraints, so that some trainees feel that some aspects of their experience, such as working with children for whom English is an additional language, has been limited. The central training is now enhanced by additional visits to provide trainees with further experience beyond that offered in the partnership, including to an ethnically diverse urban school and a further education college.
17. The partnership has good leadership structures in place to review and develop its performance. Those schools that have been at the core of the partnership over time continue to make a particularly strong and constructive contribution to its quality and direction. All partnership schools as well as trainee representatives are invited to attend termly meetings of the management committee which considers a wide range of monitoring information and development proposals. These meetings are followed shortly afterwards by strategic development committee meetings, comprised of partnership leaders and representatives of main placement schools, who take forward management committee proposals into detailed plans. Through these collaborative structures, the

partnership has been able to respond effectively to the significant recent changes in the ITE landscape. Although small, the partnership regularly attends regional briefings by Ofsted and the National College of Teaching and Leadership to keep abreast of developments. The partnership is therefore fully compliant with regulations and criteria for initial teacher training. The recently appointed course director has worked energetically to ensure that headteachers of partnership schools are increasingly involved in decisions about applications for training places on the basis of local workforce planning.

18. Self-evaluation is accurate and informed by detailed and effective monitoring and review of provision, particularly by the partnership's chair and its director. Leaders take survey information from trainees and NQTs increasingly into account in reviewing performance, although greater use could be made of national benchmark data to compare performance with that of other providers. Such thorough self-evaluation underpins the partnership's good capacity to improve. It leads to concise and well-focused action plans which, while in lacking detailed and measurable success criteria in places, are effective in improving provision and moving forward with confidence.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' and newly qualified teachers' (NQTs') teaching:

Poole High School
Poole Grammar School
St Edward's RC/CE/VA School, Poole
The Blandford School
Parkstone Grammar School
Winton and Glenmoor Academies

ITE partnership details

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| Stage 2 | 20–22 October 2014 |
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| Phases provided | Secondary |
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| Previous inspection report | http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70189 |
| | |
| Provider address | Poole High School Wimbourne Road Poole BH15 2BW |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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