

University of Essex ITE Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Re-inspection Dates: 11–14 May 2015

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education inspection handbook. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from April 2015.

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.

This is a reinspection of the further education provision, following the inspection in October 2014 that judged it to require improvement. The reinspection was conducted as a one-stage process.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

| | ITE for FE |
|---|------------|
| Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees? | 3 |
| The outcomes for trainees | 3 |
| The quality of training across the partnership | 3 |
| The quality of leadership and management across the partnership | 3 |

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Information about the ITE in FE partnership

- The University of Essex partnership was established in 2007 and comprises the University and two general further education colleges: Colchester Institute and South Essex College of Further and Higher Education.
- The partnership offers two-year, part-time in-service courses validated by the University as a Certificate of Education (Cert Ed) or a Professional Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). It also offers a one-year, full-time pre-service course leading to the Cert Ed or the PGCE.
- Staff at the two partner colleges provide all the training; no training is provided at the University. Work-based training takes place at the two colleges, at other educational settings, through voluntary work carried out by trainees, and in work placements arranged by the partner colleges.
- At the time of the reinspection, 116 trainees were on the partnership's courses, of whom 91 were on the in-service courses, of whom 36 were at South Essex College. All 25 trainees on the pre-service course were based at Colchester Institute.

Information about the ITE in FE inspection

- Inspectors carried out twelve observations of current trainees nearing the end of their training and of former trainees who completed their training in 2014. Six of these observations were with current trainees and some of these were joint observations with college staff. Inspectors also observed training sessions.
- Inspectors interviewed current and former trainees, tutors, mentors and course leaders and managers from the colleges and from the University. They scrutinised trainees' pen portraits and their portfolios containing assessed work, lesson plans, lesson observation reports and progress records.
- Inspectors considered the self-evaluation, improvement plan and position statement documents, and management and quality assurance documentation. Inspectors also reviewed current trainees' responses to the online trainee questionnaire as available on the second day of the reinspection.

Inspection Team

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Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 3

The key strengths of the ITE in FE partnership are:

- the high motivation and desire of trainees to improve their learners' knowledge and understanding and to enable them to make good progress
- trainees' good subject knowledge and wider experience which they use to good effect to gain their learners' respect and to apply their learning to the real world
- trainees' understanding of educational theories and the professional standards for further education which they relate very effectively to their assignments and teaching
- the advice, guidance and support provided by tutors and mentors which aids their trainees to improve their academic assignments and teaching practice
- the significant developments which have taken place to improve the quality of trainees' teaching and their learners' learning which are being embedded, although the full impact will not be evident until the introduction of a revised programme in September 2015.

What does the ITE in FE partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership must:

- collect and analyse partnership data on recruitment, retention, completion and destination by different groups of trainees to ensure that no group is disadvantaged
- increase trainees' understanding of:
 - how to help their learners improve their English and mathematics skills
 - how to manage disruptive behaviour
 - the 16-19 study programme
 - different remits within the lifelong learning sector
 - the dangers of radicalisation and extremism
 - how to prepare for inspection
 - how to promote equality and diversity appropriately in their lessons

- increase trainees' understanding of, and planning for, differentiation so that they include appropriate support and a range of demanding activities to meet the various needs of their learners
- ensure that lesson observation outcomes focus on learners and their learning, are evaluative and that observation grades correlate with the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the observation
- ensure through frequent training and quality assurance that mentors understand their role, improve their lesson observation skills and share best mentoring practice
- include all stakeholders in the self-evaluation process and ensure that its outcomes are evaluative, and that the ensuing improvement plan judges the impact on trainees of actions taken.

Inspection Judgements

1. The proportion of trainees completing their in-service qualifications has increased over three years and is now high. Although too many trainees did not stay on their courses at South Essex College in 2012 and 2013, this situation improved significantly in 2014. However, this increase in retaining trainees is unlikely to be sustained in this academic year since trainees have already withdrawn from, or suspended their studies, often as a result of extenuating circumstances, and have returned to their former employment. One reason for trainees' non-completion is because staff rightly urge trainees to obtain more substantive placements instead of their voluntary placements which may not offer stability. The proportion of trainees completing the pre-service course at Colchester Institute is high and has been so for the last three years.
2. The proportions of trainees whose overall attainment is good or outstanding at the end of their courses have decreased significantly over three years and are low. Trainees' overall attainment is higher at Colchester Institute than at South Essex College, despite the improvement at South Essex College last year. Trainees' teaching attainment is judged by the partnership to be very high, but inspectors judge that this is not realistic. In observations of current and former trainees, lessons are often not as good as internal observations would suggest and are rarely better. Too many observation reports focus on trainees and teaching, rather than on learners and learning. Lesson grades are higher than the text and the key areas for improvement would suggest. As a result, staff over-estimated the proportion of good or outstanding trainees at the end of their training in 2014. Managers are aware of these issues and continue to improve the validity of trainees' observation reports and the accuracy of their grading, but these still require development.

3. High proportions of trainees are employed in education or training, especially those from the in-service course at Colchester Institute. Almost all the trainees continue in employment at the end of their courses or they gain relevant employment locally, thus meeting the education and training needs in the region. Trainees frequently gain promotion as a consequence of obtaining their teacher training qualification.
4. Trainees and former trainees are highly motivated in their desire to help their learners learn and make good progress in lessons and on their courses. They exhibit a strong motivation to work with their learners and to enable learners' achievement of their qualifications. Trainees possess good subject knowledge and often wide industrial and commercial experiences which they use very effectively to enliven their lessons. Consequently, they gain the respect of their learners, especially when learners can see the practical applications of the topics being covered. Trainees often demonstrate a good knowledge of educational theories and the professional standards. They relate these most appropriately to their academic assignments and also to their teaching.
5. Although trainees and former trainees are aware of the importance of assisting their learners to improve their English and mathematical skills, of managing disruptive behaviour and of the need to promote equality and diversity in lessons, many need to develop their own strategies to fulfil these aims. The training raises trainees' awareness of these issues very effectively and they research them well, but their abilities to implement these require development. Trainees consider their course is overly theoretical and insufficiently pedagogical. Managers are aware of this and plan to address the perceived imbalance in the revised programme from September 2015.
6. Trainees' lesson plan comments under the heading 'equality and diversity' often refer to treating all learners equally, but rarely refer to matters of diversity. Such comments are also usually generic to all lesson plans and are not specific to the topics being covered in any one lesson. Trainees' understanding of modern curricula, especially the 16-19 study programme, is insufficient. The courses do not inform trainees sufficiently about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, although there are plans to include this in the module about behaviour after September 2015. Trainees are unsure of how to prepare for further education and skills inspections. Trainees and former trainees' understanding of the different remits of the further education and skills sector is underdeveloped. In their responses to the online questionnaires, too many full-time and part-time trainees express dissatisfaction with their narrow experience of a range of settings and placements.

7. Trainees' understanding and application of differentiation are inconsistent. In a good lesson, learners of fairly high abilities worked with others who were very talented in order to raise their ambitions and standards of work. Other learners worked in similar ability groups through activities on the same theme but adapted to their needs, which each found challenging. In the less effective lessons, trainees and former trainees do not plan to differentiate learners' activities according to ability; all learners work on the same level of task for the same length of time. Those learners who find the topic difficult do not receive enough support and those who find it easy finish early and wait for the activity to end.
8. Teacher educators are good role models who encourage trainees to take calculated risks in their teaching. Former trainees continue to try out new approaches to help their learners learn new topics. Trainers encourage trainees to refer to their own placements and experiences in training sessions in order to widen the knowledge base of other trainees, and to share ideas and good practice. Trainers and mentors are very dedicated in their support for their trainees. They advise and guide trainees to address their areas for development and encourage their self-reflection.
9. Trainers mark trainees' written work thoroughly and advise appropriately on spelling and grammar. Their feedback, however, is inconsistent. In the best examples, feedback is detailed, comprehensive and is very constructive, advising the trainee how best to improve the quality of the next assignment. In the weaker cases, feedback is very brief and, although positive, is not developmental and does not inspire or challenge trainees to improve their work.
10. Target setting is inconsistent. In the best examples, trainees collect their action points from various sources into one place and devote time and energy to improving key aspects of their work. They carry forward their development targets from one observation to the next in order to demonstrate improvement. Former trainees continue the development of their action plans when they finish training into their next roles. Many trainees benefit from easy access to staff development and virtual learning environments to continue their professional development after leaving their courses. In the less effective cases, targets are not specific; and trainees are unsure of how best to manage their range of targets and how to achieve them.
11. Mentors provide good subject-specific advice and guidance to their trainees which help them make progress. Most trainees and former trainees speak highly of their mentors and how they, and other colleagues, are only too willing to support them. Nevertheless, the quality of mentoring requires improvement. Mentors are unclear about their role and who has overall responsibility for trainees' progress.

Mentors' lesson observation skills are inconsistent. The best observation reports are evaluative and include clear strengths and areas for development. The less effective focus too much on the trainee and teaching and insufficiently on learners and learning. Managers intend that mentors do joint lesson observations with trainers to help them improve the quality of their observations, but this is not yet fully enacted. Mentors do not systematically share best mentoring practice or contribute to the self-evaluation of the provision. Mentors do not meet frequently with the trainee or the tutor to discuss the trainee's achievement and to share how each can best contribute to help the trainee make good progress.

12. Managers and staff have high ambitions for the partnership; they are determined to increase the quality of the provision. Their clearly stated focus is on improving the quality of trainees' teaching, learning and assessment, and consequently the learning and progress of trainees' learners. Since the last inspection, all three partners have worked at strategic and operational levels to achieve this vision. They have introduced many changes aimed at raising standards. These developments are being implemented and already trainees are experiencing better systems, but the full impact of improvements on trainees will not be evident until the introduction of the revised programmes in September 2015.
13. New staff have joined the partnership in the last year in both colleges and they cooperate and share good practice much more than was the case before their appointments. Consequently, managers and staff have increased the consistency of the quality of provision between the two colleges. The partnership has the determination and the capacity to improve its provision. Staff from the University oversee, monitor and facilitate the increased collaboration very effectively.
14. Many pre-service trainees in 2014 stated in the online questionnaire that they did not go through a rigorous selection process to gain a place on the full-time programme. The response was better in 2015 as a result of improved recruitment and selection processes. Initial interviews now contain a wider range of more challenging tasks to determine if applicants have the potential to succeed on the course. Staff ensure applicants are aware of the many demands the course will make on them. Staff are more aware of the need to improve or sustain trainees' English and mathematical skills. They realise that trainees are not always proactive in ensuring that they participate in training to increase their skills and gain qualifications in these critical areas. Consequently, staff encourage trainees to achieve qualifications and have amended modules to include a greater emphasis on numeracy.
15. Managers are aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. Their monitoring of the quality and consistency of the provision is thorough

and improving. They listen to feedback from their trainees and former trainees and respond appropriately. Their self-evaluation process is open, honest and self-critical. Managers and staff have accepted the recommendations in the previous inspection report and have made, and continue to make, progress in addressing them. Inspectors agree with partnership managers that the overall effectiveness of the provision still requires improvement, but also that the quality of the provision has improved since the last inspection.

16. The various summary documents – the self-evaluation document, the position statement and the partnership improvement plan – are too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. They do not judge the impact of the many improvement actions taken on trainees and their learners. Managers are aware of these issues and have increased their focus on improving trainees' outcomes and the validity of judgements about trainees' teaching and attainment. They are also aware of the need to include all stakeholders in the self-evaluation process.
17. The partnership does not collect and analyse data for trainees' recruitment, retention, completion and destination by different groups of trainee. Consequently, it does not know if any trainees are disadvantaged, for example, by virtue of their age, gender, disability or ethnicity. Managers are very aware of this shortcoming and during the inspection had made progress to resolve this.
18. The partnership meets its legislative requirements regarding equality and diversity, discrimination and safeguarding. Managers at the University monitor compliance with statutory regulations closely through their academic standards and partnerships office.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Colchester Institute
South Essex College of Further and Higher education

ITE partnership details

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|------------------------------------|---|
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| Inspection number | 455802 |
| Inspection dates | 11–14 May 2015 |
| Lead inspector | Shaun Dillon HMI |
| Type of ITE partnership | HEI ITE in FE |
| Phases provided | FE |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 October 2014 |
| Previous inspection report | https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/user |
| Provider address | Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ |

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