

Bath Spa University Early Years ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report
Inspection dates 16–19 May 2016

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors 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 September 2015.

This is a re-inspection of the early years ITT provision, following the inspection in October 2015 that judged it to require improvement. The re-inspection was conducted as a one-stage process.

The inspection draws on evidence 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

	Early years ITT (EYTS)
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 early years ITT phase

Information about the early years ITT partnership

- Bath Spa University works in partnership with the Best Practice Network and around 30 settings and schools across nine local authority areas in south west England to deliver early years initial teacher training (EYITT). Bath Spa trainees attend centre-based training at the university. The centre for Best Practice Network training is based in Bristol. Since September 2015, all trainees who successfully gain early years teacher status (EYTS) on the Bath Spa routes, also receive a Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE).
- The current cohort of trainees started in September 2015 and are the second cohort to complete this training. The partnership offers two postgraduate pathways to early years teacher status (EYTS): the graduate employment-based (GEB) and the graduate mainstream (GEM) routes.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 23 trainees in total. Twenty-two were on the employment-based route (16 with Bath Spa and six with the Best Practice Network). There was one trainee on the Bath Spa mainstream route. This option is no longer available through the Best Practice Network.

Information about the early years ITT inspection

- There was one inspector on the inspection team. She visited five schools and settings. During these visits she observed six trainees jointly with their mentors or tutors, scrutinised teaching files and trainees' e-portfolios of evidence to demonstrate how they met the teachers' standards (early years). She discussed this evidence with trainees and their mentors. She also met with a further trainee and had telephone discussions with two former trainees.
- The inspector met with leaders, tutors, mentors and partnership colleagues including members of the recently formed steering group. She considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including completion and employment information, recruitment and selection records, evidence of compliance with statutory safeguarding and early years ITT requirements, training documentation, partnership agreements and course handbooks.
- The inspector took particular account of the partnership's self-evaluation, and improvement planning, including enhanced quality assurance, monitoring and moderation information following the most recent Ofsted inspection.
- She also took account of 12 responses from trainees to Ofsted's online trainee questionnaire and the partnership's own surveys of the views of trainees.

Inspection team

Sheena MacDonald, Her Majesty's Inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the early years ITT partnership are:

- The partnership recruits trainees who are confident, knowledgeable and self-critical. They demonstrate high levels of professional conduct, develop strong leadership skills and become good or better early years teachers.
- Trainees understand the importance of meeting children's emotional needs. They build positive relationships and engage children in interesting, enjoyable experiences.
- Trainees have a good understanding of potential barriers to learning, including special educational needs, emotional well-being and language delay, and implement successful strategies to help children overcome them.
- The training blends theory, up-to-date research and practice very well. Centre-based training, assignments and related tasks enhance and deepen trainees' subject knowledge and their understanding of how young children learn and develop.
- Leaders demonstrate strong clarity of purpose and pursue a vision for excellence across ITT provision in the university. Their swift and vigorous response to weaknesses identified in the previous inspection has resulted in significant improvements to both outcomes and training.

What does the early years ITT partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Improve completion rates so that more trainees complete the programmes in a timely manner.
- Improve the consistency and quality of mentoring and partnership working, by:
 - ensuring that mentors, trainees and tutors do not place undue emphasis on individual lesson observations when assessing the quality of trainees' teaching and its impact on children's learning over time
 - ensuring that all setting leaders and mentors understand the importance and value of trainees experiencing a variety of different placements
 - building capacity by making more use of current good practice in mentoring and in partnership settings.

Inspection judgements

1. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in the early years phase is good. The programme is producing early years teachers who are highly motivated and passionate about ensuring that children get the best possible start. All trainees exceed the minimum level of practice as defined by the teachers' standards (EYTS) at the end of their training and demonstrate consistently high standards

of personal and professional conduct. The partnership is fully compliant with the early years initial teacher training requirements and meets all the relevant safeguarding and other statutory requirements for promoting equality and diversity, and eliminating discrimination.

2. There have been significant improvements in outcomes for trainees and the quality of training since the previous inspection and both are now good. This is the result of clear and purposeful leadership. Leaders have high expectations that the early years ITT routes will reflect the outstanding provision across Bath Spa's provision in the primary and secondary phases. Early years routes are included in cross phase working across all of the university's teacher training programmes and this is supporting the improvements in provision.
3. The swift and vigorous response to weaknesses identified in the previous inspection has resulted in outcomes which, at this point in the year, are considerably stronger than they were at the same time last year. There is much greater consistency across the partnership and clearer roles, responsibilities and systems for tracking, assessing and supporting trainees' mentors when necessary. These improvements are the result of sharp and effective improvement planning, increased rigour of quality assurance and the moderation of assessments.
4. Almost all former trainees are employed and many have enhanced roles and responsibilities as a result of gaining EYTS. The first cohort completed the programme in the last academic year. Numbers are relatively small and there is very little historic data. Last year, 57% of trainees' attainment was judged to be good and 43% outstanding by the time they completed their training. This year a higher proportion is on track to achieve outstanding grades and inspection evidence supports the accuracy of the provider's assessments of trainees.
5. Recruitment and selection systems are effective in ensuring that all trainees have the potential to be good or better and all of the current cohort are already exceeding the teachers' standards (early years) at a good level. However, eight of the current cohort who started the course in September are not on track to complete the course by the end of this academic year. Three have withdrawn and five have deferred or interrupted their training. Although, in all cases, there are unexpected and understandable reasons, the university should consider whether more can be done both at the selection phase and during the training to ensure more trainees complete in a timely manner.
6. Most trainees that the university recruits are employed in the early years sector and often have experience of working with young children. Throughout the training, this experience and knowledge is built on effectively. The Ofsted survey of trainees' views shows that trainees are very positive about the impact that the training has had on strengthening their understanding of young children's development and in their confidence to teach them effectively.

Trainees can demonstrate how they have improved their practice as a result of their training.

7. Theory, research and practice are blended coherently throughout the training. Centre-based sessions, assignments and related tasks enhance and deepen trainees' knowledge. Trainees are particularly positive about the opportunities to share expertise and experiences with their peers and to receive training in particular settings such as a children's centre or a specialist early years setting for children with additional needs.
8. Trainees and former trainees are highly professional. They are expected to take responsibility for deepening their own knowledge and rise to this challenge admirably. They use their developing understanding of theory and research to refine their own practice. Their portfolios show that they reflect regularly, and in depth, on the effectiveness of their teaching and the impact that this is having on individual children's learning and welfare. Tasks, such as tracking a small group of profile children, are effectively supporting a deepening of trainees' understanding of the impact of their teaching on the learning and progress of children over time.
9. Trainees understand that children learn best and develop independence by being happy and active learners. In the sessions observed during the inspection, children were involved, interested, active and had fun. In one session, a small group of children were skilfully engaged in conversation while they made salads by choosing the correct equipment to cut, peel, slice and grate ingredients. Children showed high levels of confidence, skill and independence and extended their vocabulary during the activity.
10. The centre-based training sessions and subject knowledge tasks support trainees to develop good knowledge of early mathematics and early reading, including phonics. Several interesting and engaging activities were observed during the inspection where children enjoyed learning about letters and sounds, number and measurement. For the most part, the learning is pitched at an appropriate level with good links being made with themes and stories. Trainees are enthusiastic about both early reading and mathematics but sometimes they do not address basic mistakes such as letter and number formation and are occasionally too quick to move onto abstract ideas.
11. Trainees have a good understanding of potential barriers to learning. This is particularly strongly developed in those trainees who have benefited from a range of placements in various socio-economic contexts. They understand the importance and the implications of attachment theory and adopt strategies to support children's emotional well-being. They generally provide appropriate challenge for more-able children, those who are learning English and those with special educational needs. Some express a desire to work in areas of high

disadvantage so that they can use their effective teaching skills where they will have the greatest impact.

12. Safeguarding, including the dangers of extremism, and the promotion of values such as belonging to a group and the celebration of difference have a high profile in the training. As a result, trainees can discuss the implications of these important features and show how they promote safety, well-being and values in practice.
13. The quality of mentoring, feedback and target setting varies and this is an aspect where trainee responses are relatively weaker in Ofsted's online survey. Some trainees benefit from regular high-quality professional dialogue and their self-reflection is deepened as a result. Their targets are sharp, progressive and well designed to support them in achieving high levels of knowledge and understanding against the teachers' standards (early years). However, this is not always the case and some mentors do not always have a sound understanding of the demands of the course or of what constitutes good teaching and learning in the early years. Sometimes, observations of individual teaching events dominate feedback and discussions. There is too little emphasis given to wider evidence of trainees' development across all of the teachers' standards (early years) and the impact of their teaching on children's learning over time.
14. The weaknesses in mentoring are mainly because the training is relatively new and because mentors are often inexperienced. The university is seeking ways to compensate for this by, for example, requiring Best Practice Network tutors to carry out most of the mentoring responsibilities, particularly in relation to assessing trainees' progress. Trainees reflect on their progress and review and renew their targets with their mentors or tutors every two weeks. The university requires these meetings to be recorded and monitors the records to identify where additional support is required. In addition, the university's well-received mentoring training programme and tight tracking arrangements are going some way to improving weaknesses in mentoring.
15. Placement experiences have a positive impact on trainees' understanding and personal development. All trainees experience different age groups of children in the early years and also spend time in Reception and key stage 1 classes in schools. Some benefit even more by being able to experience placements in a greater variety of early years settings and this has a very positive impact on their progress. These wider experiences build confidence as well as enhancing trainees' understanding and most trainees return from placements keen to influence colleagues and bring about improvements in their home settings. Some use the knowledge and leadership skills they gain on the course to influence the wider early years community through, for example, the organisation of seminars for early years practitioners in the wider local area.

16. Timeliness in the organisation of placements is one of the few relatively weaker responses to the Ofsted trainee online survey and may reflect a reluctance on the part of some employers to release trainees for placement activities. The university information stresses the positive impact and value that should be placed on this important element of the training. Leaders, including the steering group, are currently seeking solutions, such as paired placements or trainee swaps to alleviate these difficulties.
17. The partnership uses a range of settings, judged to be at least good, in varied socio-economic groups which provide for different groups of children. The small numbers, the size of settings and wide geographic dispersal have made it difficult to build capacity in the short term. Leaders, including the steering group, are devising creative ideas to enhance the quality of the training by, for example, making use of trained mentors and developing innovative training materials for mentors, including films of best practice.
18. The wider partnership is becoming stronger and setting-based colleagues make an increasing contribution to the centre-based training. The steering group is drawn from experienced partners and is enthusiastic about its role in working alongside partnership leaders to bring about further improvements.

Annex: Partnership schools/settings

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' teaching:

Westview Day Nursery, Bradford on Avon
The Clifton Children's House Montessori School, Bristol
Clifton Tots Day Nursery, Bristol
St Nicholas of Tolentine RC Primary School, Bristol
Castlemead Primary School, Trowbridge

ITE partnership details

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Provider address	Bath Spa University, Newton Park, Bath BA2 9BN



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