

University of Sunderland ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report
Inspection dates 23–26 May 2016

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty’s 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 September 2015.

The inspection draws on evidence from the early years initial teacher education 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 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.

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?	3
The outcomes for trainees	3
The quality of training across the partnership	3
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	3

Information about the early years ITT partnership

- The partnership offers three routes to the award of Early Years Teacher Status: a full-time programme leading to the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years Studies with Early Years Teacher Status; a part-time employment-based route leading to an Advanced Diploma in Early Years Studies with Early Years Teacher Status; and a three-month Assessment Only route for graduates who have extensive experience of working with children across the birth to five age range.
- At the time of the inspection, eight trainees were following the full-time programme and six trainees the part-time pathway. No trainee was on the Assessment Only route.
- This is the second year that the partnership has offered programmes leading to the award of Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS).
- The university works in partnership with a small number of early years settings, including schools, across the North East. Most partnership settings are based in and around Sunderland. At the time of the inspection, all linked schools and settings had been judged good or better by Ofsted.

Information about the early years ITT inspection

- When the University of Sunderland ITE partnership was previously inspected in October 2015, it was judged to require improvement.
- The inspection was conducted by one inspector who visited four schools and early years settings. During these visits, four trainees were observed teaching and receiving feedback from their partnership mentor or tutor. The inspector also held discussions with some setting-based mentors. In addition, a meeting was held with eight other current trainees. Nine responses to the online trainee questionnaire were considered.
- Additional visits were made to two former trainees in an early years setting and to one former trainee working in a school. One of the former trainees is now a setting-based mentor within the partnership.
- The inspector met representatives from the partnership and from the early years partnership board. He considered the partnership's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about trainees' completion and employment rates, evidence of compliance with statutory safeguarding and early years ITT requirements, training documentation, partnership agreements and course handbooks. He reviewed a sample of trainees' portfolios and the targets set for trainees' professional development.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan Her Majesty's Inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

The key strengths of the early years ITT partnership are:

- The programme recruits trainees who are passionate and enthusiastic about working with children in the early years. Through training and placements on the programme, trainees become more skilled, confident and able to review their own teaching in order to improve their practice.
- On completion of the programme, trainees' employment in the early years develops well through their successful application for new posts or through their existing employers making full use of trainees' increased expertise.
- Trainees, tutors and mentors have a clear and increasingly understood set of criteria against which the progress of trainees is being evaluated. As a result, there is broad accuracy in the assessment of trainees against the teachers' standards (early years).
- Trainees are benefiting from increased opportunities to discuss with their peers how to apply their learning in university-taught sessions. They welcome these opportunities and say it helps them become more confident to act as leaders while working in local schools and early years settings.
- Since the previous inspection, the partnership has developed clear systems to track the attainment of trainees. This information is routinely reviewed by the partnership. Concerns about trainees lead to clear plans of support which help trainees to improve their practice.

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

The partnership must:

- improve trainees' understanding of early mathematics and phonics so that trainees know how to develop and organise their ideas into a broad programme for teaching, making sure that this is matched well to the needs of babies and toddlers as well as children aged between two and five years of age
- make sure all trainees have an in-depth understanding of safeguarding
- ensure that setting-based mentors use regular, formal observations to inform their weekly discussions with trainees and to agree developmental targets
- make sure all tasks set by tutors for trainees about phonics and early mathematics are achievable and meaningful, as well as relevant, when the tasks are used as key evidence against the teachers' standards (early years)
- improve understanding across the partnership of the strengths and areas for improvement within the programme and specifically, strengthen the ability of tutors and mentors to spot weaknesses in trainees' teaching and to give precise, accurate feedback about improvement.

Inspection judgements

1. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in the early years phase requires improvement. This is because the quality of the programme in securing high-quality outcomes and training for trainees is not consistently good. While valuable improvements have been made to the programme since the previous inspection, some weaknesses remain. This shows that leadership and management of the programme continues to require improvement.
2. After the outcome of the last inspection, there has been increased oversight of the early years ITT programme by the education department, rather than the social sciences department, as previously. This has meant that some existing, effective arrangements for developing and reviewing education courses have been extended to the early years programme. For example, new grade descriptors for trainees' attainment have been introduced. Modelled on the approach used already within the education department, the use of these descriptors is now leading to broadly accurate judgements of early years trainees' attainment.
3. Clear, new arrangements for the external moderation of judgements about trainees are modelled on the primary/secondary ITE arrangements. The partnership now holds a much clearer overview of the attainment of trainees over time. Programme leaders have identified correctly that the overall attainment by trainees is slightly higher for those on the part-time route. Where weaknesses are identified, relevant support for trainees is arranged. An example is the extra help for full-time trainees to better understand the use of assessment to support children's learning. As a result, the large majority of trainees are on track to meet or exceed the teachers' standards (early years).
4. As noted at the previous inspection, the university is held in high regard within the city and wider region for its work to promote the early years. Strong relationships remain in place between leaders of the partnership and the schools and settings where trainees are placed. Although the programme is set to close, the university remains committed to building links with partners to support educational improvement in the region.
5. One of the key benefits for full- and part-time trainees remains the breadth of their placement experiences. This is giving trainees the confidence to work with children from birth to seven years in different types of schools and settings, including children's centres. The tasks to introduce trainees to their experiences in schools are particularly well-considered. Consequently, trainees progress well during these placements. Although the range of placements used gives fewer opportunities for trainees to work with children who speak English as an additional language, trainees show a good understanding of equality and diversity.

6. Despite there being clearer review and oversight of the programme within the university education department, some aspects require further attention. For example, not all members of the early years partnership board have a clear understanding of the functions of the board. Nor do they fully know its priorities, or its impact since the previous inspection. This is because not enough support has been given to help board members fulfil their roles effectively.
7. An improvement since the last inspection is the introduction of joint observations of trainees by university tutors or mentors and setting-based mentors. While this has improved mentoring skills, some setting-based mentors are agreeing weekly targets for trainees without reference to regular, organised observations of teaching. As a result, some trainees' targets are focused too little on the improvement of their teaching. Likewise, some targets set by university mentors are too broad-sweeping to guide trainees precisely in how to improve their teaching.
8. Where support from tutors and mentors for trainees is best, trainees receive clear, accurate feedback about their teaching. Trainees are given advice and targets that focus precisely and accurately on the key points for improvement. Where such support is less successful, feedback is imprecise and even inaccurate in evaluating the quality of teaching observed. While such instances are in the minority, they illustrate the variability that remains in the quality of the support for trainees.
9. Trainees show a well-developed understanding of the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage. As reported at the previous inspection, this enables trainees to form strong relationships with children and establish a nurturing environment in which children can learn. Trainees understand what might indicate bullying and they manage children's behaviour well while on placement.
10. The main taught session at the university about safeguarding covers a wide range of up-to-date issues. In addition, trainees gain valuable insights into safeguarding practices throughout their placements. However, the partnership is not checking trainees' understanding of safeguarding issues well enough. As a result, the level of understanding about safeguarding varies between trainees. For example, some trainees are less clear about the 'Prevent' duty, whereas others know too little about different types of abuse. Nevertheless, trainees know how to spot, report and follow-up any concerns they may have about the safety of children, families or staff.
11. Through the programme, trainees have been given valuable help to consider the importance of listening to children and encouraging their talk as part of their teaching. In the sessions observed during the inspection most trainees were skilful at modelling and adapting their language. In one effective example, the trainee inspired children by saying: 'We're rich. Rich. Rich beyond our

wildest dreams'. This linked to a recent pirate story as the children made cardboard models of pirate ships. Such comments and the trainee's willingness to explore with the children sustained their learning well.

12. Trainees are increasingly able to use assessment information effectively to plan learning opportunities that challenge all children, including children who have special educational needs or disability and the most able. Additional training arranged by the partnership through experienced early years practitioners is proving valuable for trainees. Trainees are also benefiting from tutors and mentors frequently prompting and advising them on how to plan and evaluate this aspect of teaching. In one instance, the trainee skilfully guided, encouraged and gave clear instructions to a group of Reception class children in their model-making with clay. She adapted well to the children's different abilities because she had considered their needs carefully.
13. As at the time of the previous inspection, the partnership meets its legislative requirements including those about safeguarding, recruitment and equality and diversity. Systems to review and record trainees' qualifications and their suitability to work with children are thorough and recorded clearly. The selection and recruitment of trainees is strengthened by the involvement of personnel from partner early years settings.
14. University-based training has been strengthened to give trainees much more opportunity to consider how to apply their learning to their own teaching. Tasks set by tutors about leading practice are helpful and developmental. As a result, trainees' ability to implement new knowledge within their teaching has increased. The impact is evident in the increased confidence and skill shown by trainees to take a leadership role while on placement.
15. The previous inspection reported that the partnership attracts and develops trainees who are deeply committed to the early years. The trainees are passionate about the benefits of graduates leading teaching. The findings of this inspection support that conclusion. The post-qualifying experiences of former trainees show the programme makes a positive difference to their careers; for example, in gaining promotion to lead new provision for two-year-olds.
16. Four trainees have left the programme since its start. However, evidence shows this was not linked to their progress but to unexpected and understandable personal reasons. Programme leaders are aware that this needs to be kept under review as the current retention rate is lower than in the previous year. Nonetheless, trainees feel that the programme meets their needs and their views are welcomed as part of programme development.
17. Trainees now have more confidence in teaching early mathematics and phonics and can consider a wide range of ideas in their planning of children's learning. This is because of the content of taught sessions provided by the partnership

through links with a local early years training organisation. However, not all trainees are clear in how to use and organise these ideas into a planned sequence of teaching for different ages of children in the early years. In addition, few trainees (from both routes) can explain what they have learned about babies' mathematical development even though this has been a focus for reading and discussion during the programme.

18. The quality of portfolios of evidence developed by trainees has improved since the previous inspection. Tutors and mentors have given trainees useful advice and trainees continue to evaluate their own work well. A pilot of electronic portfolios with full-time trainees is showing particular success in trainees presenting a coherent suite of evidence. Most evidence within portfolios is linked clearly and carefully to the teachers' standards (early years). Nevertheless, some programme tasks about phonics and early mathematics highlighted as being relevant portfolio evidence are not sufficiently meaningful or achievable.

Annex: Partnership schools/settings

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' teaching or to meet former trainees:

Blackhall Colliery Primary School, Blackhall Colliery

Dame Dorothy Daycare Nursery, Monkwearmouth

Little Angels Nursery, Sunderland

New World Nursery, Washington

Ribbon Academy Trust, Seaham

Seaham House Day Nursery, Seaham

ITE partnership details

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Provider address	David Goldman Informatics Centre St Peter’s Way Sunderland SR6 0DD



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