

Ashton on Mersey ITE Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 20/06/2016

Stage 2: 07/11/2016

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted 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.

The inspection draws on 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 and 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

Primary and secondary routes

Information about this ITE partnership

- The Ashton on Mersey school centred initial teacher training (SCITT) partnership began in September 2014. It is part of the Dean Trust teaching school, which sits at the heart of the Dean multi-academy trust. Ashton on Mersey secondary school is the lead school in the partnership.
- Within the partnership there are approximately 45 primary schools across 10 local authorities and 16 secondary schools across 10 local authorities.
- The partnership offers a one-year training programme, which on successful completion leads to qualified teacher status (QTS) and a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE).
- Trainees can opt to train in either the primary (5–11) or the secondary (11–16) phase.
- The primary training programme enables trainees to follow a core primary route or to train as physical education (PE) or mathematics specialists.
- Secondary trainees specialise in PE, with a second subject specialism in either mathematics or biology at key stage 3. During 2015/16, a very small number of secondary trainees were trained as English specialists with enhanced expertise in special educational needs. This programme has been suspended for the 2016/17 academic year.
- There is a mixture of core and School Direct training programmes across the primary and secondary phases. During stage one of the inspection, there were 47 trainees on the primary route. Six of these trainees followed the School Direct route, with one being salaried. In the secondary phase, there were 16 trainees. Two were following the School Direct route.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- During stage 1, inspectors visited nine schools and observed 16 trainees, teaching across the primary and secondary phases. They spoke to headteachers, school mentors and trainees. They also met with groups of trainees across different training routes, mentors, link tutors and trainers at the SCITT base. They held discussions with SCITT leaders, programme leaders and members of the strategic partnership board. They took account of the 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for trainees.
- During stage 2, inspectors visited eight schools. They observed 11 NQTs teaching. They spoke to headteachers, school mentors and induction tutors when they visited schools. They also met with NQTs from different training routes at the SCITT base. Meetings were held with SCITT leaders and representatives from the partnership. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with two employing schools.

- In both stages of the inspection, inspectors evaluated a range of evidence including trainees' files and work in pupils' books. They also considered a range of documentation provided by the partnership, including information on trainees' attainment, employment and completion. They reviewed the partnership's website and checked safeguarding arrangements and compliance with the ITT criteria.

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson	Her Majesty's Inspector	Lead inspector
Kath Harris	Ofsted Inspector	Assistant team inspector
Phil Riozzi	Her Majesty's Inspector	Team inspector (stage 1)
Rajinder Harrison	Ofsted Inspector	Team inspector (stage 2)

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership are:

- Employment and completion rates for primary and secondary trainees are above average, with over a third employed in partnership schools. This signals the confidence and trust headteachers place in the innovative training programmes.
- Trainees' strong attainment against the teachers' standards mean that they are well prepared to teach their chosen age phase and subject specialism. They leave their different training programmes as well-rounded, resilient and reflective NQTs.
- Trainees and NQTs are especially skilled in forming positive relationships and managing pupils' behaviour.
- Trainees' and NQTs' strong professional attitudes reflect their commitment to teaching, their understanding of the role and their ambition to make a positive difference to pupils' life chances.
- A well-planned and unique suite of training programmes equip trainees and NQTs with additional specialisms. This not only maximises their employability but sets them up well for future leadership roles, while meeting the demand for good and better teachers in subject shortage areas.
- The commitment of schools to the partnership is evident in the strong influence school staff have on the design and delivery of the training programmes.
- Highly reflective, self-critical and receptive leaders have been fundamental in ensuring the success of the training programmes since inception.

- High expectations, a shared ethos and a clear vision for the future cement the cohesive leadership team together and underpin a common drive for excellence
- A determined response to the weaknesses identified at stage 1 of the inspection indicates the capacity of leaders and partnership schools to move the SCITT forward with speed and efficacy.

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

The partnership should:

- improve trainees' teaching skills and knowledge further by embedding recent changes to the training programmes so that:
 - primary trainees have a stronger understanding of the early years so they are well equipped to build on children's prior learning
 - secondary trainees have greater opportunity to plan, teach and assess their second subject specialism
 - trainees across both phases are more skilled in using assessment information to plan for the progress of different ability groups.
- use the improved systems to quality assure school and centre-based training to iron out variation in trainees' teaching and to equip mentors with the skills to provide trainees with precise targets for improvement.
- enhance leadership and management by:
 - extending the partnership to include more schools that Ofsted has judged to be less than good to ensure that trainees gain more experience of working within these settings and so that these schools benefit from good and better teaching
 - reviewing the information that employing schools receive to ensure that it is explicit in outlining how well secondary trainees achieve in their second specialist subject.

Inspection judgements

1. Strong leadership, the unique training programmes, the close involvement of schools and the recruitment of high-calibre trainees underpin the success of the Ashton on Mersey SCITT. Despite operating for a relatively short period of time, leaders are making great strides in meeting the demand for good and better primary and secondary teachers, especially in subjects where there is a shortage of teachers.

2. NQTs from this partnership are in demand, not only for their well-developed teaching skills, but for the extra expertise they possess in mathematics, biology, English, special educational needs and PE. Consequently, employment rates are above average. Headteachers are overwhelmingly positive about their new teachers. They are delighted with the NQTs' readiness for teaching, their adaptability, their professionalism and their willingness to get 'stuck in'. NQTs quickly become valued and valuable members of staff.
3. Completion rates are also above average. Effective recruitment procedures ensure that only those candidates with the right attitudes and attributes are selected for the programme. High levels of care from leaders, who know trainees exceptionally well, mean that all are supported to stay the course. Very few choose to leave before the end. When this does occur, the reasons are not related to trainees' dissatisfaction with the programmes.
4. Well-structured, cohesive and innovative training programmes enable trainees to gain the skills and knowledge to be successful teachers. All trainees, regardless of the route, age phase or subject specialism they study, surpass the teachers' standards by the end of their training. There are no differences between any groups. All have an equal opportunity to thrive and to reach their potential.
5. Trainees and NQTs from this partnership share a number of notable characteristics. They are thoughtful, buoyant and enthusiastic. They are reflective and happy to accept support, listen to feedback and put new learning into practice. NQTs' good grounding in age-appropriate teaching techniques and their strong subject knowledge, especially in their specialist areas, means that they are ready to make a difference to pupils' learning from the start.
6. A stand-out feature of this partnership is the highly effective training for behaviour management. Consequently, trainees and NQTs manage pupils' behaviour very well. Their good use of a range of behaviour strategies, plus their calm and confident manner, ensure that learning is rarely disrupted. Classrooms and PE spaces are harmonious, warm and welcoming due to the positive and trusting relationships NQTs and trainees create. Pupils enjoy their learning, respond well to their new teachers and feel safe.
7. Trainees and NQTs use resources well, especially information technology, to capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning – for example, taking and sharing photographs as pupils work to help pupils see how various models can be used to solve mathematical problems.
8. Schools are benefiting from the extra expertise trainees and NQTs possess. For example, they lead on extra-curricular activities and willingly share their skills with staff to support whole-school improvement. They work well with other adults in the classroom, deploying them effectively to support pupils' learning.

9. Trainees and NQTs typically plan well-structured, age-appropriate and lively lessons. They model new ideas and skills well, pose effective questions and give clear instructions to ensure that pupils make a swift start to their learning. For example, in a secondary dance lesson, boys responded positively to the creative context and the NQTs' high expectations for behaviour and participation. All groups planned, practised and performed their dance sequences without fuss, disruption or fear of appearing silly.
10. A strong focus on safeguarding means that trainees and NQTs are very well prepared to spot the signs that may indicate that pupils are suffering from harm or at risk from extremist views. All have a clear understanding of their role in delivering the 'Prevent' duty. Recent training has made them think carefully about their role in tackling homophobic and transphobic bullying, for example by avoiding language which reinforces stereotypes.
11. Trainees and NQTs are aware of the different ability needs within their classes, but they do not always pitch pupils' work at the right level. They succeed well in matching work and adult support to those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make good gains in their learning.
12. Elsewhere, pupils sometimes find their work too easy or too difficult. This is because trainees and NQTs do not use information about prior learning well enough when planning their lessons. While most NQTs mark pupils' work in line with the school policy, others do not put their training to good use.
13. Other than assessment, there are no other common flaws in teaching. Nonetheless, there is some variation in trainees' and NQTs' teaching skills. Where some demonstrate considerable strength, others may be struggling with the same aspect. This inconsistency is not due to particular weaknesses in the central training programme. It is a direct result of uneven mentoring and a lack of rigour in the quality assurance of the school-based training.
14. School leaders and mentors are keen to be part of the partnership. They are committed to nurturing new teachers. Mentors are generous with their time and expertise, forming professional, supportive relationships with trainees. However, the impact of their work is patchy. Some mentors do not provide sharp enough targets to help trainees understand what they need to do to improve. Not all new mentors to the partnership accessed training or had timely support to ensure that they were meeting the expectations for the role.

15. In the primary phase, a few trainees were not able to make the most of the thoughtful and well-structured opportunities to visit the early years. A small number were not able to put the good-quality phonics training into practice in a timely manner. In the secondary phase, some trainees had insufficient time to plan, teach and assess their second subject specialism. This is because mentors did not always ensure that these experiences took place in line with the guidance issued by the SCITT. The checks made by link tutors did not pick up these gaps quickly enough.
16. These relative weaknesses were identified during stage 1 of the inspection. Leaders' speedy and effective action is already reaping rewards. Quality assurance systems have been tightened considerably and mentor training has improved. The heightened expectations for school-based training, identified in the updated partnership agreements, are explicit to all. Frequent checks by programme leaders are eliminating any inconsistency quickly and firmly for current trainees.
17. Trainees gain the skills and knowledge to teach their specialism and chosen age phase through a well-designed and structured central programme. Six cross-cutting themes underpin the training for primary and secondary trainees. This programme enables them to master a wide range of teaching techniques, develop their subject knowledge and understand the wider aspects of school life, such as safeguarding and British values.
18. Centre-based training is recent and relevant because 'partnership plus' schools have a pivotal role in shaping and delivering the sessions. Time is used effectively. The training programmes are crammed full of additional opportunities to broaden trainees' experience. For example, all trainees develop their skills in teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language by visiting a range of schools. 'Elective learning' personalises the training programme so trainees can gain greater experience of special educational needs or begin to consider their future leadership roles.
19. Subject specialist training is especially strong, using local renowned expertise alongside national associations to make sure that trainees are at the cutting edge in their field. This increases trainees' confidence and their employability, especially in the secondary phase. It is one of the reasons this SCITT is so unique. In the primary phase, subject knowledge sessions link well to the core training programme to ensure that trainees can teach effectively across the whole curriculum.
20. Trainees make a swift start to their training journey because pre-course tasks help them to gain the basics quickly. For primary trainees, this is complemented further by attendance at a bespoke and effective summer school. The postgraduate aspect of the training is helpful in enabling trainees to link theory to practice through useful assignments.

21. Primary trainees, regardless of their specialism, gain a deep understanding of mastery and mathematics. This is evident in NQTs' confident teaching of mathematical ideas and their use of mathematical resources. Similarly, they are skilled in teaching PE. Pupils' books demonstrate the effectiveness of NQTs' training in how to teach writing. They know what pupils should be able to do for their stage and they offer plentiful opportunities for writing across many different topics.
22. Although the training for phonics is comprehensive, limited opportunities for some trainees to put their learning into practice mean that NQTs often need extra support in this area. Up until this year, the content of the primary curriculum sessions did not pay enough attention to the early years. Consequently, those NQTs who teach younger pupils do not have a firm enough grasp of pupils' prior learning.
23. Throughout the training programme, secondary trainees become expert teachers of PE and English, with an ability to deliver the breadth of each subject to different age groups and abilities. NQTs gain sufficient subject knowledge to successfully teach their additional subject specialism at key stage 3. Secondary trainees understand their role in promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. They typically do this well – for example, using information technology to record and then analyse physical activity during PE sessions.
24. In both phases, the link between school and centre-based training are cemented well through exceptionally informative placement handbooks and tasks. These provide a highly effective scaffold to trainees' learning, helping them to identify good practice, review current research and reflect on their own teaching skills.
25. Trainees benefit from a diverse range of school placements, including those that are facing challenging socio-economic circumstances. They are well prepared to teach in different types of schools. For example, some have chosen to work in special schools, while others have opted to work in coastal areas or schools where the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is high. As a result, trainees and NQTs have a good understanding of their role in championing the achievement of disadvantaged pupils to help these pupils make good progress. Secondary trainees gain a good overview of teaching in schools that Ofsted inspectors have judged to be less than good. This is not true for primary trainees. Currently, there are too few of these schools actively involved in the partnership.
26. Trainees are fulsome in their praise for the training programme. NQTs echo these positive views time and time again.

27. A highly effective, cohesive and ambitious leadership team accounts for the successful establishment of the Ashton on Mersey SCITT. Its passion for developing good and better teachers and its appetite for excellence shines through the extremely comprehensive improvement plan. They share the same reflective qualities as the trainees they nurture. They seek out advice, listen to feedback and take immediate action to bring about positive change.
28. The exceedingly rapid and earnest response to the findings from stage 1 of the inspection is testament to leaders' desire to be the best. Far-reaching and fundamental change means that all of the identified shortcomings are being tackled with vigour while the many strengths of the partnership are being effectively built on.
29. Trainees' progress is tracked carefully and swift action is taken at the first sign that a trainee may be struggling. Good systems are in place to support trainees who are facing difficulties, which means that few withdraw and everyone is able to surpass the teachers' standards by the end of the programme.
30. Clear systems are in place to validate the accuracy of final assessments. Good use is made of the external examiner to check any trainees who are on the borderline of two judgements. An effective and rigorous exit interview ensures that a range of partnership representatives have a role in moderating trainees' attainment. Consequently, no trainee slips through the net without demonstrating consistently good or better teaching skills. This means that the partnership's information on trainees' attainment is typically accurate.
31. Strategic leadership of the SCITT within the Dean Trust umbrella is effective in setting long-term priorities in line with the multi-academy trust's overall vision. The newly formed strategic board is now giving partnership schools greater ownership of the SCITT's development.
32. Good procedures are in place to support NQTs as they begin their career. These former trainees remain very much a part of the Ashton on Mersey family. A purposeful professional development programme is supplemented by useful monthly newsletters and online resources to keep NQTs up to date. NQTs know that they can access support if needed as programme leaders have already made contact, often visiting employing schools to offer their help.
33. The information provided by leaders to employing schools helps to secure a baseline to set development targets for each NQT. However, not enough detail is provided to secondary schools to ensure that senior leaders have a firm understanding of the NQT's competence in planning, teaching and assessing their second subject specialism.
34. All associated policies and procedures are in place to keep trainees safe, free from harassment and inequality. All of the ITT requirements are met in full.

Annex: Partnership schools

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

Ashton on Mersey School, Sale

Bollin Primary School, Altrincham

Burnley Brow Community School, Chadderton

Cherry Tree Primary School, Lymm

Dean Trust Ardwick, Manchester

Fiddlers Lane Community Primary School, Irlam

Forest Gate Academy, Partington

Holy Trinity CofE Primary School, Blackley

Meade Hill School, Blackley

Oakwood Avenue Community Primary School, Warrington

Park Road Sale Primary School, Sale

Parrs Wood High School, East Didsbury

Partington Central Academy, Urmston

St Antony's Catholic College, Urmston

The Barlow RC High School and Specialist College, Didsbury

Wellington School, Altrincham

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70301
Inspection number	10010225
Inspection dates	20/06/2016
Stage 1	
Stage 2	07/11/2016
Lead inspector	Joanne Olsson
Type of ITE partnership	SCITT
Phases provided	Primary and secondary
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Previous inspection report	
Provider address	Ashton on Mersey School Cecil Avenue Sale Manchester M33 5BP



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