

University of Essex ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report
Inspection dates 21–23 November 2016

This inspection was carried out by 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.

This is a re-inspection of ITE in further education (FE) provision, following the previous re-inspection in May 2015 that judged the provision to require improvement. The re-inspection was conducted as a one-stage process.

The inspection draws on evidence from 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

	ITE in FE
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

Information about the FE in ITE partnership

- The University of Essex ITE 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 postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE). The partnership 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, and in work placements arranged by the partner colleges.
- At the time of the re-inspection, 97 trainees were on the partnership's courses, of whom 68 were on the in-service courses. Of these, 27 trainees were at South Essex College and 41 at Colchester Institute. Of the 29 trainees on the pre-service course, 23 trainees were based at Colchester Institute and six at South Essex College.

Information about the FE in ITE inspection

- Inspectors carried out seven observations of current trainees nearing the end of their training and of former trainees who had completed their training in 2016. Four of the observations were with former trainees, and of the three observations of current trainees, two were joint observations with college staff.
- Inspectors observed training sessions in both partnership colleges.
- Inspectors interviewed current and former trainees, tutors, mentors, and course leaders and managers from the colleges and from the university.
- Inspectors scrutinised trainees' pen portraits and their portfolios containing assessed work, lesson plans, lesson observation reports and progress records.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including checks on compliance with statutory safeguarding requirements and evidence of how well trainees' teaching meets the 2014 professional standards for teachers and trainers.
- Inspectors considered the partnership's self-evaluation, improvement plans and position statement documents, and management and quality assurance documentation.

Inspection team

Alan Winchcombe Ofsted Inspector	lead inspector
Pauline Hawkesford Ofsted Inspector	assistant lead inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the FE partnership

- The partnership has improved the outcomes for trainees since the previous inspection, which has resulted in good levels of attainment and high rates of employment for trainees.
- The expertise and commitment of tutors in implementing the revised programme are closely aligned to the needs of the further education and skills (FES) sector, so that trainees rapidly make a valued contribution to employers and learners.
- The strong personal support, together with the high level of subject-specific and wider academic guidance given by tutors and mentors, help trainees to successfully complete their programme and to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence as teachers.
- The enthusiasm, expert subject knowledge and professional approach of the trainees make learning enjoyable and meaningful so that learners make progress, gain personal confidence and better understand life and work in modern British society.
- There is resolute determination and increased capacity of leaders and managers to work closely together to drive forward improvement in the quality of trainees' teaching for the benefit of learners.

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

The partnership should:

- increase trainees' understanding of the range of curricula and provider settings in the FES sector beyond their own immediate subject specialism and employment, so that trainees advise their learners of the full range of progression opportunities available
- strengthen the monitoring of target-setting and assessment feedback so that all trainees receive consistently detailed and precise advice to help them make faster progress in their teaching skills.

Inspection judgements

1. Since the previous inspection, trainees' outcomes have improved significantly across the partnership and are now good. A high proportion of trainees achieve their qualification. All trainees who complete their courses reach or exceed the 2014 professional standards for teachers and trainers (the professional standards). The selection of trainees is rigorous, and the proportion of trainees achieving higher grades has increased significantly since the previous inspection. There is no difference in outcomes between different groups of trainees.

2. Trainees demonstrate good practice in most areas of the professional standards and in all those relating to their personal and professional conduct. Trainees are reflective, keen and open to learning from others, and increasingly confident in their planning and teaching. Trainees build strong relationships with their learners, which helps learners to progress. They are realistic about the demands of their teaching roles, enthusiastic in teaching their subjects and are resilient in their determination to become better teachers for the benefit of their learners.
3. Trainees move quickly into employment, or maintain and extend their existing employment. Trainees successfully progress into colleges, as well as independent training providers, and increasingly find employment in local academies. Employers recognise the attributes of partnership trainees, and pre-service trainees are quickly recruited into employment within the local area and more widely. Employers value the trainees highly for their immediate and often energising contribution to their specialist areas and departments, and for their willing engagement with wider activities inside their organisations. Those trainees already in employment rapidly take on new responsibilities, for example as course leaders and tutors, or teach on a much increased range of programmes.
4. Since the previous inspection, the quality of training has improved and is now good. A key factor leading to this improvement has been the successful introduction of the revised training programme, which aligns much more closely with the current teaching and learning priorities in FES. As a result, tutors support trainees more effectively in building a strong foundation for teaching in the FES sector.
5. Professional standards are carefully mapped within each teaching module and embedded throughout the revised programme. As a result, trainees rapidly become very familiar with the standards and apply them constantly when reviewing their own progress and in planning their future development. In addition, trainees now complete a detailed portfolio of achievement at the end of their programme, which captures their progress against the standards. In this way, trainees recognise very clearly where they should focus their continuing professional development. Tutors supplement this portfolio with a summary document setting out clear, short-term targets agreed between the tutors, mentors and trainees. This serves as a very helpful transition document for trainees' new employers, as well as providing evidence for the many former trainees wishing to gain qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) status.
6. At the previous inspection, the grading of trainees' performance in observations was found to be over-generous. Tutors now carry out all formal observations, and the grades awarded are carefully moderated, within the teaching team and externally, to ensure that judgements are appropriately evaluative and accurate.

7. In addition, course tutors now carry out a joint observation with every mentor at the beginning of the year and carefully model the kind of termly reports expected from mentors for each mentee. A revised observation form, developed collaboratively within the partnership, focuses tutors', mentors' and trainees' attention very effectively on evaluating the impact of trainees' teaching on learning and the learners. Inspectors agreed with the assessments made for all of the trainees observed.
8. The tutors are dedicated and provide good role models. They encourage trainees to be creative and to take risks in their teaching in order to enthuse and help learners make good progress. As a result, trainees become confident in trying out different teaching approaches to help learners of different abilities and attitudes. For example, in one drama class, learners who have complex learning and behavioural needs were encouraged by a former trainee to use a visual chart shared with their peers to explain how confident they felt about a forthcoming performance. As a result, learners built greater social and emotional awareness of others and became more confident.
9. Tutors skilfully weave educational theory together with classroom practice through constant reference to the trainees' individual teaching responsibilities. As a result, trainees, including those who have already been teaching for a number of years, are able to apply educational theory in their teaching. They become more reflective and develop good academic research and writing skills. Trainees gain a heightened sense of professionalism, combined with an increased determination to continue to improve their skills for the benefit of their learners.
10. The introduction of a module focused on behaviour management now prepares trainees very well to manage the needs of a diverse range of learners. Trainees develop clear and often subtle strategies, skills and techniques for managing learners' behaviour. Trainees build strong relationships with their learners and quickly establish boundaries of acceptable behaviour within classes. For example, in one session, learners used their mobile phones to complete an independent research task, but knew to remove their mobile phones quickly from tables afterwards. In all sessions observed by inspectors, the calm and quiet control exerted by trainees led to a safe and inclusive learning environment, where learners respected the views of their peers and felt able to offer their own contributions to learning.
11. Within the revised programme, tutors use their extensive skills and experience to make sure that trainees understand the current teaching and learning priorities within the FES sector. As a result, trainees are better able to plan effectively to meet these expectations. For example, tutors underline the importance trainees should give in their teaching and learning to priorities such as the promotion of equality and diversity, the safeguarding of their learners, British values, and the prevention of extremism and radicalisation.

12. All trainees are keenly aware in their responsibilities and take these carefully into account when planning their lessons. As a result, trainees progressively build their skills in integrating themes, such as equality and diversity, naturally into their lessons. For example, in one very effective session on child development, skilful planning by the trainee meant that a study of child nutrition led to learners contributing ideas naturally on how certain foods are viewed by different religions and beliefs. The learners also considered how this might affect the attitudes of parents towards their child's physical development. However, a minority of trainees remain less confident in identifying ways to make themes such as British values relevant and meaningful within their vocational teaching. They do not take opportunities to develop these themes within lessons.
13. Course leaders and tutors have responded well to the national priority of developing learners' skills in English and mathematics. They have done this by ensuring that the importance of these subjects permeates trainees' thinking throughout the revised training programme. As part of the more rigorous selection process, applicants for the programme are required to hold appropriate qualifications in English and mathematics. Notwithstanding this, all trainees must complete a further diagnostic test in English and mathematics. This, combined with individual targeted support, ensures that trainees have necessary, current competence to support the learners' development. Tutors continue to emphasise the importance of developing learners' skills in English and mathematics as a thread that runs throughout the programme, for example in class discussions and lesson observations.
14. Trainees embed English successfully in many lessons in a way that is meaningful and relevant for the learners, for example, by building technical word lists in vocational subjects. They use probing questioning to develop learners' higher level spoken skills, or through the careful correction of learners' spelling and grammar. Trainees also plan carefully to integrate the relevant use of mathematics into their sessions. However, the activities they choose do not consistently challenge or extend the most able learners sufficiently. For example, in one session, the most able learners very quickly completed the set task, which comprised simple addition and multiplication using a calculator.

15. Trainees are keen to expand their experience and teaching strategies. Many trainees proactively seek out opportunities to learn from others in their subjects in order to make their lessons more engaging for learners. Despite this, current trainees do not gain a sufficiently broad understanding of the breadth of curricula and provision in the FES sector. For example, many are not aware of the wide-ranging development of apprenticeships or study programmes. Consequently, trainees are not sufficiently well informed to tell their learners about the range of progression opportunities available to them in the sector. Programme leaders recognise the need to broaden trainees' understanding of the FE sector beyond their immediate subject specialism or employer. They have begun to make more effective use of contributions from trainees working in different settings, the mandatory peer observations and visits to different providers, in order to broaden trainees' experience.
16. As at the previous inspection, trainees continue to value highly the strong personal support, expert advice and guidance given by tutors, mentors and colleagues in their specialist areas. This enables trainees to make good progress. They say that their tutors and mentors were always accessible and supportive, and responded quickly to any personal concerns they raise. Mentors are carefully selected and all complete mandatory training. They support their trainees' subject-specific development very effectively with valuable advice, resources and alternative teaching strategies. In addition, tutors and mentors routinely help trainees to gain the wider practical skills required of teachers in the sector. For example, pre-service trainees quickly become confident in using college e-portfolios, virtual learning environments and other data systems. As a result, employers know that former trainees they appoint can immediately take up full teaching duties.
17. Since the previous inspection, communications between tutors, mentors and trainees are much improved as the result of a dedicated online system now used for monitoring and supporting trainees' progress. Following each observation of a trainee, tutors ensure that the trainee's mentor is informed immediately of the key targets set for that trainee. Mentors then work closely with their trainees to plan subject-specific actions based around these targets for their next lessons, and, in particular, to identify how these actions will directly benefit the learners.
18. Too many of the targets recorded for trainees do not consistently reflect the depth of the discussions with mentors and tutors. Written feedback and targets set for trainees are not consistently detailed or clear enough to help trainees progress as quickly as possible. Managers recognise this, and further action is already being taken to improve the overall consistency of target-setting and feedback. For example, a new system for risk assessing individual mentors has been introduced to ensure greater consistency in the quality of the trainees' experience, although this is at an early stage of development.

19. Leadership and management have improved, and are now good. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong determination to continue improving the programme for the benefit of future trainees and to meet the changing needs of the sector. The value of the partnership in meeting local and national needs is clearly demonstrated by the partnership's reputation for developing good teachers, and by employers' enthusiasm for appointing former trainees.
20. The commitment of the partnership's leaders, together with the much closer involvement of senior college managers responsible for quality, and teaching and learning, have significantly increased the partnership's capacity to implement improvements more rapidly. Leaders and managers have resolutely carried forward the actions highlighted in the previous inspection report. For example, the enhanced collaboration between partners, the more robust use of data and sharply focused interventions by managers have increased the accuracy and validity of assessments. As a result of these actions, the quality of training and the outcomes for trainees have improved significantly.
21. Managers are well aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. They recognise that further development is needed, for example, to ensure greater consistency in target-setting and to continue to drive up the proportion of trainees achieving higher grades across all programmes. The current self-evaluation document is open and honest. It recognises accurately the clear progress that has been made since the previous inspection and sets detailed, aspirational, but achievable targets for future improvement.
22. The partnership meets its legislative requirements regarding equality and diversity, discrimination and safeguarding learners. Managers at the university monitor compliance with statutory regulations closely through their academic standards and partnership office.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Colchester Institute
South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70257
Inspection number	10010277
Inspection dates	21–23 November 2016
Lead inspector	Alan Winchcombe
Type of ITE partnership	HEI ITE in FE
Phases provided	FE
Date of previous inspection	11 May 2015
Previous inspection report	https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/user
Provider address	Wivenhoe Park Colchester Essex CO4 3SQ



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