

# University of Bedfordshire ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report  
Inspection dates 8–11 May 2017

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This inspection was carried out by three Ofsted Inspectors and 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 primary provision, following the previous inspection in 2016 that judged it to be inadequate. The re-inspection was conducted as a one-stage process.

The inspection draws on evidence from the primary phase 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

	<b>Primary QTS</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b> How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	2
<b>The outcomes for trainees</b>	2
<b>The quality of training across the partnership</b>	2
<b>The quality of leadership and management across the partnership</b>	2

## The primary phase

### Information about the primary partnership

- The University of Bedfordshire Primary Partnership includes over 150 primary, lower and middle schools located across Bedfordshire, and 11 other local authorities. The partnership also includes several multi-academy trusts, teaching schools and free schools.
- The university offers two main routes to qualified teacher status (QTS): a three-year undergraduate course leading to a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and a one-year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). Trainees on both routes train to teach pupils aged 5-11 years. The university currently offers postgraduate specialisms in physical education (PE) and mathematics.
- The university works in close partnership with schools and groups of schools to deliver School Direct routes into teaching. It also offers the assessment-only route into teaching.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 228 primary trainees: 63 Year 1, 55 Year 2 and 58 Year 3 BA trainees. There were 27 PGCE trainees, 10 of whom were specialising in PE. There were 25 trainees following School Direct routes, one of whom was specialising in primary mathematics.

### Information about the primary ITE inspection

- During the re-inspection, inspectors visited 14 schools. They observed lessons taught by 15 PGCE trainees and four newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Most of the trainees' teaching was observed jointly with mentors and the feedback provided by these mentors was also observed.
- During the visits to schools, the inspectors met with other trainees, including Year 1 BA trainees, NQTs and headteachers. They scrutinised teaching files, mentors' records, university tutor visit records, NQTs' induction files and evidence of trainees' achievements against the teachers' standards. Inspectors discussed the trainees' and NQTs' achievements with their mentors and school leaders.
- Inspectors met with groups of Year 2 and Year 3 BA trainees, and scrutinised their teaching files. They also took account of 150 responses from trainees to Ofsted's online trainee questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with senior staff from the university, and partners from schools and local authorities. They considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including evidence of self-evaluation and improvement planning, placement handbooks and tracking records, mentors' training and employment and completion information.

- Inspectors scrutinised information about action taken by the provider since the previous inspection, to ensure full compliance with the initial teacher training (ITT) requirements, to enhance the rigour and accuracy of assessment, and to improve the quality of information shared with schools at the end of training.

### Inspection team

Sheena MacDonald	Ofsted Inspector	lead inspector
Wayne Stallard	Ofsted Inspector	assistant lead inspector
Anna Richards	Ofsted Inspector	team inspector
Ruth Brock	Her Majesty's Inspector	team inspector

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 2**

### The key strengths of the primary partnership are:

- Rigorous recruitment and selection procedures result in high completion rates, especially on the BA route, and high employment rates on all routes. As a result, the provider makes a strong contribution to teacher supply locally.
- Trainees become highly professional teachers who establish positive and productive relationships, and effectively promote the learning of all pupils.
- Central training is effective in ensuring that trainees have good subject knowledge in mathematics, science and early reading. External partners make a highly valued contribution to the centrally based training.
- Leaders have established high levels of trust and strong, effective partnerships across the ITT phases and with schools and local authority partners.
- Leaders continually strive for high quality across all ITT routes and phases. This is resulting in improving trends in outcomes for trainees.

### What does the primary partnership need to do to improve further?

#### The partnership should:

- improve the achievement of PGCE trainees and male trainees so that gaps between the achievement of different groups are reduced
- implement the quality assurance procedures more rigorously and in a more timely manner to maximise their impact
- ensure that all mentors have a good understanding of the teachers' standards, their responsibilities in assessing trainees' achievement against these and in supporting trainees to make rapid progress.

## Inspection judgements

1. The provider is now fully compliant with the Secretary of State's criteria for ITT and meets the relevant safeguarding and other requirements for promoting equality and eliminating discrimination. Compliancy is now a standing item on all committee meetings, placement handbooks have been revised and records of trainees' teaching are rigorously tracked. Leaders have taken thorough steps to ensure that all trainees have key stage 1 and key stage 2 experiences in different schools. Often this has included contrasting placements, for example in urban and rural schools or in schools in different socio-economic circumstances. Many have also spent some time in the early years and in key stage 3. Trainees can demonstrate that they have gathered evidence of their achievements against the teachers' standards from both placements.
2. School and local authority partners are confident that the provider makes a strong contribution to recruitment and is enhancing teacher quality across the partnership. They believe that the provider selects the right trainees, who then go on to become successful teachers. Higher than average proportions of trainees complete the courses, take up teaching posts and become good all-round teachers. Completion rates overall are well above average; however, slightly fewer than average PGCE trainees complete the course.
3. Outcomes are good. All trainees exceed the minimum standards expected by the end of their training and the vast majority achieve a good or outstanding grade. There is some variation in the achievement of different groups. A much higher proportion of female trainees and BA trainees achieve at the outstanding level than male trainees and those following the PGCE route. Raising the achievement of these groups is a key priority in the provider's improvement plan.
4. The previous inspection identified some concerns about the accuracy of grading, particularly at the good/outstanding boundary. The provider has carried out a great deal of work to address this concern and, for the most part, inspectors agreed with the provider's judgements on trainees' achievements. Where there were inaccuracies, it was because of mentors' over-generous interpretation of the teachers' standards and concerns being raised or identified rather late. As soon as any concerns are raised, by schools, trainees or during the progress review meetings, the university tutors are quick to visit and explore the issues with the trainee and mentor, and provide additional support and challenge.
5. Trainees show exemplary levels of professional conduct and commitment to the teaching profession. They make a good contribution to the wider life of their schools. They have a thorough understanding of the importance of safeguarding pupils and have experienced training on aspects of keeping children safe, both with the provider and in each school placement.

6. Relationships with the pupils and other adults are positive and productive. Trainees talk confidently about how they plan to meet the different needs of learners, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those at the early stages of learning English. These aspects are included in all core subject training and in the specialist PE sessions, and are highly effective and positively evaluated features. Trainees adapt the learning activities and use strategies such as visual reminders to meet pupils' individual needs effectively. They often take pupils' previous learning into account when planning lessons and are able to use assessment information to plan sequences of lessons. Trainees are less confident about being flexible in amending lessons 'on the spot' to maximise learning and sometimes do not really stretch their most able learners.
7. Trainees comment positively on the impact of their training, particularly the practical activities in mathematics, literacy and science. Subject audits are carried out and reviewed regularly, and further support provided when necessary. As a result, trainees have a very sound understanding of mathematics, science and early reading, including phonics. Their confident subject knowledge in mathematics was evident in several of the teaching sessions observed during the inspection, when trainees made appropriate use of specific mathematical vocabulary, encouraged the pupils to do the same, and gave pupils good opportunities for explanation and reasoning.
8. Trainees very much enjoy the training in the foundation subjects and would welcome more. They plan and teach the wide primary curriculum. Several examples were seen of trainees and NQTs linking the learning across different subjects such as literacy and personal, social, health and emotional learning and literacy, and PE.
9. Trainees comment that their study of modules such as Child Development and Research Informed Teacher have a positive impact on their practice. Guest speakers from schools and local authorities covering subjects such as special educational needs, behaviour management, and formative and summative assessment are very positively reviewed. Trainees say the guest speakers are practical, interesting and informative. The PE specialists' sessions are also highly evaluated, particularly when exploring aspects such as the teaching of PE to pupils learning English. Nonetheless, the trainee online survey shows that overall, trainees lack confidence in teaching PE. Trainees felt this was because of the use of sports coaches in many schools, which limited their opportunities to teach PE. Some trainees, particularly those in Year 1 of the BA course, have noted that they would like more variation in ways learning is presented at the centre. Several trainees and NQTs felt that subjects were sometimes covered several times.
10. There is some very effective mentor feedback and support. This results in high-quality professional dialogue between mentors and trainees with a clear focus

on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. There are opportunities for trainees to reflect on their practice, and appropriate challenge and support to motivate them to improve their practice. Trainees are willing, and able, to reflect on the impact they are having on how well pupils are learning. Year 1 BA trainees are beginning to engage with the teachers' standards and there is evidence in their files that some are already beginning to consider the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

11. In most cases, mentoring targets are clear and easy to track from week to week with an increasing focus on pupils' outcomes in mentor feedback sessions. However, some targets agreed by trainees and mentors are not specific enough; for example, when trainees have the same generic target for several weeks. This is reflected in the quality of reflection in some of the weekly mentor records as evaluations of pupils' learning are sometimes quite general.
12. Mentors who attend the development day training and the pre-placement briefings are very positive about their value. However, where mentors have not been able to attend training, this sometimes results in a lack of clarity about the provider's procedures and the mentors' understanding of how to assess trainees' achievement rigorously against the teachers' standards. This has led to inaccurate grading of trainees and poorer target setting in a small number of cases. These are picked up and tackled; however, although the provider's systems for quality assurance are appropriate, sometimes the quality enhancement visits happen very late in a placement and this reduces their effectiveness.
13. On the whole, placements are of good quality and the trainee online survey confirms this. Trainee survey results are less positive about the timeliness of placement arrangements, but particular circumstances this year may have affected this outcome. There has been some confusion regarding who does what and when because of the recent changes. Although most of the school colleagues found the partnership handbook explicit and helpful, where schools are less happy with the partnership is usually because they are critical of the clarity and quality of communications. The provider is trying to engage partners more effectively by having briefing sessions in several different locations across a wide geographical area.
14. Trainees appreciate the support for moving into their first teaching post. They say that the guidance with applications and interview practice provided by a partnership headteacher helps them to secure teaching posts. There is a strong partnership with local headteachers and local authority representatives to support NQTs. This partnership shares information about individual trainees and works closely with the local authority to identify NQTs' ongoing training needs. The 'Transition to NQT' group feel that the provider's trainees are ready for their next step, very professional, and have a good knowledge of the teachers' standards.

15. The provider has made changes to the information shared with future employers. This year's document will include the grading against each of the teachers' standards, along with a copy of the completed Career Entry Development Profile (CEDP) and targets the trainee is still working on. The CEDP has continued to be developed in partnership with two local authorities and local headteachers. The current profiles show a deeper level of reflection as the trainee identifies their needs for the transition to NQT. However, it is not possible to evaluate the impact of these changes as this information will not go out to all partners until the final year trainees pass and move on to being NQTs in September 2017.
16. Leaders share a very evident passion to ensure that they are constantly improving the provision to produce the best possible teachers. There is an overarching, coherent plan for teacher education across all phases, a positive vision for excellence and an effective pursuit of improvement at all levels. The provider gathers and analyses extensive information and data, identifies accurate areas for improvement and takes appropriate action. The rising trend in trainees' outcomes shows that there is clear capacity for further improvement. There are strong partnerships with schools and local authority colleagues, who express trust in the provider to work with them to produce good teachers.

## **Annex: Partnership schools**

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

Springfield Lower School, Bedford

St James Lower School, Bedford

The Roundhouse Primary School, St Neots

Church End Lower School, Marston Moretaine

Elstow School, Elstow

Rickley Park School, Milton Keynes

Chestnuts Primary School, Milton Keynes

The Hills Academy, Bedford

Hazeldene School, Bedford

Denbigh Primary School, Luton

Tennyson Road Primary School, Luton

Eynesbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, St Neots

Castle Newnham School, Bedford

Heronshaw First School, Milton Keynes

## ITE partnership details

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Type of ITE partnership	HEI
Phases provided	Early years ITT, primary, secondary and further education
Date of previous inspection	November 2016
Previous inspection report	<a href="https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70160">https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70160</a>
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