

The National Mathematics and Physics SCITT

Wycombe High School Academies Trust, Marlow Road, High Wycombe HP11 1TB

Inspection dates

24 to 27 May 2021

Inspection judgements

Secondary age-phase

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education and training

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to be a trainee at this ITE partnership?

Trainees are attracted to the National Mathematics and Physics SCITT (NMAPS) by the high-quality, subject-specialist training and research-informed learning. Typically, they have already achieved high levels of academic success in either mathematics or physics and are a mix of recent graduates, career changers and those who have worked in schools.

Trainees value how well subject leaders and mentors within their regional hub know them as individuals. They feel particularly well supported to understand the pedagogy and practice required to teach their subject. Trainees also benefit from national training days and professional networking opportunities which help deepen their subject knowledge. They appreciate how leaders support their well-being and longer-term career aims.

Some current trainees feel their practical experiences of behaviour management and teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are limited due to the nature of their placement schools. However, usually trainees benefit from specialist guidance and visits to other settings during their training year. Former trainees confirm that NMAPS equipped them with a secure knowledge of safeguarding and how and why to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

Information about this ITE partnership

- NMAPS is led by and based at Wycombe High School. Governance of the SCITT is overseen by the Wycombe High School Academies Trust. The headteacher of the school is the accounting officer.
- Since opening three years ago, NMAPS has attracted growing numbers of trainees each year. Trainees train to teach secondary-age (11 to 16 years) pupils in either mathematics or physics. Nearly all complete a postgraduate certificate in education with the University of Buckingham.
- Fifty-nine trainees started their training in September 2020. By the time of this inspection, 53 were still on the course, six trainees having withdrawn or deferred during the year. Four trainees were engaged in the Department for Education's Researchers in Schools programme and following the School Direct route.
- This national, subject-specialist SCITT currently operates via eight regional hubs. Each hub is led by either one or two schools supporting a wider network of placement schools in the local area. The hub schools are Bolton School, Camden School for Girls and Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Charterhouse, Cheadle Hulme School, Dulwich College, Headington School and Wycombe High School, King's High School and Warwick School, and Oundle School. There are plans to open further hubs to increase national coverage and in areas of high demand.
- In addition to the hub lead schools, the partnership involves a large number of placement schools, some of which change from year to year. This year, trainees have been placed at a total of 43 different schools across the partnership.
- The independent schools that lead most of the current hubs are not inspected by Ofsted. Of the other 89 schools involved in the partnership over the past three years, most were graded 'good' or 'outstanding', five were judged 'requires improvement' and two 'inadequate' at their last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) together with two Ofsted Inspectors (OI).
- Inspectors met with the accounting officer, the SCITT lead, the director of the SCITT, the programme leader and a representative of the University of Buckingham. The lead inspector spoke with five headteachers or senior leaders of schools in their role as members of the strategic board. A meeting was also held with the chair and vice-chair of Wycombe High School Academies Trust.
- Inspectors held discussions with a total of 16 trainees and four previous NMAPS trainees now employed in schools, either when visiting them in schools or during online meetings.
- The inspection team carried out focused reviews in mathematics and physics. They met with a selection of subject leads from the SCITT's different hubs, scrutinised course documents and visited six schools to talk with senior leaders, mentors and trainees. Inspectors reviewed evidence of trainees' learning and, where possible, observed them teaching the subject being reviewed.

What does the ITE partnership do well and what does it need to do better?

Working with subject experts and professional associations, leaders have designed a well-structured, coherent and ambitious ITE curriculum informed by the ITE core content framework. Together, SCITT leaders, hub subject leads (HSLs) and mentors pass on their infectious enthusiasm for, and expertise in, teaching physics and mathematics to trainees. Subject experts from each region are appointed as HSLs. They deliver the centrally agreed course to trainees in their local network of schools. HSLs maintain oversight of the programme and the quality of mentorship in their region. This small team approach ensures alignment between central training and what trainees learn through the generally expert mentorship they receive in schools.

This collaborative approach to curriculum design and delivery has worked well to date. Regular meetings between HSLs and SCITT leaders are used to good effect to review and refine curriculum provision. HSLs make skilled use of pertinent research to develop the hub-based, subject training sessions. Experienced curriculum leaders know exactly what they want trainees to learn and how their knowledge will be built up over time.

A small minority of new mentors and HSLs do not have as secure an understanding of the partnership's curriculum and best practice in ongoing assessment of trainees' learning. Without more detailed curriculum plans to refer to, some inconsistencies in practice have appeared this year. This is due to changes in school-based staff and HSLs as the partnership has evolved, coupled with the impact of the pandemic this year. Leaders' planned improvements to assessment and monitoring systems have been delayed. The pandemic has also impacted on induction of mentors and necessitated changes to the training programme.

Communication between SCITT leaders and partnership schools is strong. Headteachers are willing to give their staff's time to the partnership because of the benefits NMAPS membership brings to their schools. School leaders from the lead schools within each hub act as a strategic board. Board members are kept well informed via quality assurance systems and through their schools being actively involved in the partnership. They offer suitably robust guidance and challenge to SCITT leaders.

What does the ITE partnership need to do to improve the secondary phase?

(Information for the partnership and appropriate authority)

- Changes to staffing within schools, and the rapid growth of the partnership, have impacted upon the consistency of expert mentorship and leadership across and within the hubs. Leaders' induction programmes for all mentors and HSLs at the beginning of each year are valued. However, they have not ensured all mentors and HSLs are fully aware of the scope of NMAPS' ITE curriculum. The full execution of

leaders' existing plans, together with more effective monitoring, is required to ensure the highest quality of mentorship across the partnership.

- The quality and depth of the professional dialogue that exists between mentors and trainees is not consistently reflected in the trainees' online portfolios. This restricts SCITT leaders' quality assurance and oversight of ongoing assessment of trainee's learning across the partnership. Leaders have designed significant improvements to their quality assurance and assessment systems. However, the delivery of these has been delayed by the pandemic. These plans for richer ongoing assessment, with a tighter alignment to the core content of the curriculum, need to be implemented as a matter of priority.

Does the ITE partnership secondary phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?

- The partnership meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria

ITE Partnership details

Unique reference number	1272920
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This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) in accordance with the 'Initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook'.

This framework and handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2020.

Type of ITE Partnership	SCITT
Phases provided	Secondary
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Metcalf	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Holden	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Partnership settings, schools and colleges

Inspectors contacted trainees and staff at the following settings, schools and colleges as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE Phase(s)	Date joined partnership	Current Ofsted grade
Headington School	123290	Secondary	September 2018	ISI - Excellent
St Michael's Catholic School	110516	Secondary	September 2019	Good
Dulwich College	100861	Secondary	September 2018	ISI - Excellent
The Elmgreen School	144309	Secondary	September 2018	Good
Charterhouse	125340	Secondary	September 2018	ISI - Excellent
Broadwater School	147935	Secondary	September 2019	Good

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