

University of Buckingham

Vinson Building, Hunter Street, Buckingham MK18 1EG

Inspection dates

14–17 June 2021

Inspection judgements

	Primary age-phase	Secondary age-phase
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	Good
The quality of education and training	Requires improvement	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good	Good

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

Trainees find the programme both demanding and rewarding. They praise the pastoral support offered and describe leaders as open, responsive and flexible.

Trainees like the predominantly school-based design of the training and take pride in the academic rigour underpinning it. Trainees show commitment to course reading, reflecting carefully about the impact of research on their teaching. The dovetailing of theory and practice deepens trainees' understanding of why certain strategies in teaching work, rather than just learning a random repertoire of techniques which teachers use.

Trainees speak highly of the expert guidance and support offered by mentors and tutors who are knowledgeable in their specific phase or subject. The partnership has been creative and successful in minimising the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions on the quality of training wherever possible.

Trainees' lived experience exposes them to the realities of teaching and what this entails, including managing behaviour and meeting a range of pupils' needs. The design and implementation of some aspects of the course mean, however, that leaders do not ensure that primary trainees are as well prepared as they should be to teach the full national curriculum. Other aspects of the primary course, including early reading, are notable strengths.

Information about this ITE partnership

- The University of Buckingham Faculty of Education provides a wide range of initial and additional teacher and leadership training. This inspection considered only routes which include recommendation of the award of qualified teacher status (QTS).
- The University of Buckingham ITE partnership provides routes to QTS in the primary and secondary phases. In both phases, the partnership offers a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) with QTS, assessment only and apprenticeship routes into teaching. There is also a QTS conversion course which is specifically aimed at those who have already successfully completed the University of Buckingham's own independent PGCE that does not have QTS attached.
- In addition, the partnership offers a course aimed at preparatory school teachers that spans key stages 2 and 3. Inspectors considered this route as part of the secondary phase.
- At the time of the inspection, the substantive head of the primary cohort was on maternity leave. This means that there have been three different people leading the primary phase in recent years.
- Applicants must be employed in a school as a non-qualified teacher for the school-based elements of the training to be eligible to join the programme. The partnership works in conjunction with external employment partners for those undertaking a teaching apprenticeship.
- At the time of the inspection there were 108 trainees on primary phase QTS routes and 224 trainees on secondary and preparatory QTS programmes.
- Partnership schools are spread right across the country. Two thirds are independent schools. The partnership works with Premier Pathways to recruit trainees employed previously as teaching assistants in state schools, often in areas of disadvantage.
- The vast majority of schools in the partnership are graded good or better, either by Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted by six of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted inspectors. In addition to the overall lead inspector, four inspectors formed the secondary phase team and there were three inspectors on the primary phase team.
- Inspectors held discussions with the dean of the faculty of education, the director of programmes, three heads of cohort, several subject leaders, lead tutors, tutors, and operations managers and staff. Meetings were held individually and in small groups with current and former trainees. Inspectors also spoke with school-based mentors, headteachers and senior leaders.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with 49 trainees or former trainees. They communicated with 57 schools, including 13 which they visited in person. One complete school visit was conducted remotely. Inspectors also took account of the

views expressed in 83 inspection surveys completed by trainees and 68 returned by staff.

- To evaluate how well trainees are prepared to teach, the inspection team focused on early reading, mathematics, history and geography in the primary phase, and English, biology, chemistry, physical education and art in the secondary phase.
- At the time of the inspection, most partnership leaders were still working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspection activities were conducted using a blended approach of remote and face-to-face meetings.

Primary phase report

What works well in the primary phase and what needs to be done better?

Leaders are mindful of current developments in teacher training. They have ensured that the course programme complies with the core content framework. Aspects of the programme are ambitious in scope, including, for example, exploration of psychology and child development. Leaders have considered carefully the order in which the training addresses what trainees should learn. Elements such as behaviour management are revisited and build well throughout the programme. However, the focus on the national curriculum foundation subjects is not sharp enough to ensure that trainees are sufficiently well prepared to teach all primary subjects.

School- and centre-based trainers have suitable subject and phase expertise. They work well together to promote an increasingly rich understanding of how to teach the core subjects of the national curriculum. However, there is less clarity about and understanding of leaders' expectations regarding the foundation subjects. The partnership's quality assurance systems, which have worked well in some respects, have not focused enough on trainees' engagement with, and learning from, training about foundation subjects.

Course content about the teaching of early reading is high quality, well designed and effective. Carefully planned input builds trainees' understanding of the centrality of reading to pupils' learning and the importance of systematic synthetic phonics. Trainees describe ways in which the training has had a direct impact on their teaching, including in knowing how they can help weaker readers.

Schools play an active role in the training of individual trainees. Mentors work closely and effectively with experienced and knowledgeable tutors. Leaders have taken care to introduce mentors to the overall intent, structure and content of the ITE curriculum. The systematic design of different elements of the training ensures that these combine to form a coherent and well-integrated package.

Ongoing assessment of trainees centres on how well they are absorbing and implementing what trainers intend them to learn. This focus, with the teachers' standards as a backdrop, provides trainees with meaningful feedback about their progress. Regular professional development plans facilitate ongoing reflections and dialogue between mentor and trainee and are an influential tool in developing trainees' thinking and practice.

The partnership's strongly inclusive ethos is reflected in trainees' commitment to ensuring that pupils of all abilities succeed. Trainees describe the notable impact that specific training in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs has had on their practice and enjoyment of teaching.

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

[Information for the partnership and appropriate authority]

- The focus on the national curriculum foundation subjects within the training is not as sharp as it should be. While training sessions are recorded for trainees who have selected others that run concurrently, some choose not to access these sessions. Trainees' use of helpful tools such as the subject audits, subject-specific reading lists and the partnership's signposting of external resources, is variable. As a result, some trainees are not sufficiently well prepared to teach the full range of national curriculum subjects. Leaders should ensure a stronger focus on the foundation subjects in the course programme. They should make sure that all trainees benefit from high-quality training across the foundation subjects, so that they are well equipped to teach the full range of national curriculum subjects.
- Leaders' intentions as to how trainees should learn to teach the foundation subjects are not consistently well understood by trainees or all relevant training partners. Required elements of school-based training in relation to the foundation subjects are not formalised and are not communicated to schools well enough. This leads to variability in trainees' experiences and leaves some with gaps in their training. Leaders should ensure that expectations about required training in the foundation subjects are consistently communicated across the partnership, so that schools play an effective role in delivering training in the foundation subjects.
- The partnership's quality assurance processes do not emphasise the checking of trainees' engagement and learning linked with the foundation subjects. This means that leaders do not have enough oversight of the gaps that exist in some trainees' training and, consequently, some trainees' knowledge, understanding and practice. Leaders should ensure that there are suitable mechanisms and processes in place to assure themselves that trainees not on specialist routes are sufficiently well prepared to teach the full national curriculum.

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

- The partnership meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

Secondary phase report

What works well in the secondary phase and what needs to be done better?

Leaders have developed an ambitious, coherent and challenging ITE curriculum. Based around the partnership's own five curriculum themes, the well-structured course is informed by the core content framework and underpinned by a wealth of pertinent academic research. Together, heads of cohort, subject leads and mentors ensure that trainees foster a deep subject knowledge and rich range of pedagogical skills. Trainees typically become very well-informed and highly reflective practitioners.

The course is appropriately structured around specific subjects in the secondary phase. This year, some trainees' experiences of teaching aspects of practical work and/or sixth-form teaching were limited due to the pandemic. Mentors and leaders responded flexibly to offer trainees alternative learning opportunities, where possible. However, the school-based experiences of some trainees have limited their opportunities to embed learning about raising achievement for disadvantaged pupils.

A skilled team of tutors helps ensure the effective delivery of the programme. Tutors support trainees well and monitor the quality of mentoring. Leaders use lead tutors' regular feedback to refine curriculum provision. This well-established system ensures effective alignment between central training sessions and the typically expert mentorship that trainees receive in schools.

A minority of mentors do not have a sufficiently deep understanding of the partnership's curriculum. Consequently, the quality of feedback which mentors offer to trainees about their progress through the intended curriculum varies. Leaders' plans rightly target this area for further improvement.

Experienced subject leads use their subject-specific expertise to influence and inform their centre-based training. Leaders have rightly prioritised plans to ensure that new subject leads secure sufficient understanding of the breadth and sequencing of the ITE curriculum. Heads of cohort ensure that subject leaders' training sessions align with the overall curriculum vision. Surveys of trainees also feed into leaders' quality assurance. However, monitoring does not provide subject leads with sufficiently detailed feedback about the impact of their centre-based subject training on trainees' knowledge and practice in schools.

Although partnership leaders seek and take account of school leaders' views, schools are not directly involved in the strategic leadership of the partnership. However, school leaders are very willing to dedicate time to the University of Buckingham programme because of the benefits that membership brings. Recognising this, some schools have been part of the secondary partnership for a number of years and remain actively committed to it.

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

[Information for the partnership and appropriate authority]

- Leaders' induction programmes for mentors and subject leads and their use of surveys to gather feedback are valued. However, leaders have not ensured that all mentors and subject leaders are fully aware of the scope and sequencing of the ITE curriculum. Consequently, there is some inconsistency within the quality of expert mentorship and subject leadership across the partnership. Leaders should fully execute their plans to ensure that mentors provide trainees with more consistently in-depth and precise ongoing feedback. In addition, monitoring should be refined to inform subject leads how their centre-based training sessions impact upon trainees' developing teaching skills in schools during the year, so that they can refine their training.
- Despite experiencing a range of expert-led, centre-based training opportunities, many trainees do not retain a suitably in-depth knowledge of how high-quality teaching improves the chances of disadvantaged pupils. For many current and former trainees, their school placements provided limited opportunities for them to apply their learning in this area. As a result, they do not consistently remember these aspects of the training and/or have developed common misconceptions. Further action is needed by leaders to monitor the impact of training in this area, making adaptations to trainees' school-based training where necessary, to resolve this.

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	70172
Inspection number	10188463

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) 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	HEI
Phases provided	Primary Secondary
Date of previous inspection	24–27 June 2013

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, Overall lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Newberry, Phase lead inspector (secondary)	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Sackett, Phase lead inspector (primary)	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harry Ingham	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Lambert	Her Majesty's Inspector
Yasmin Maskatiya	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gary Holden	Ofsted Inspector
Abbie Wilkinson	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Partnership schools

From the full list of partnership schools, the following schools were visited, as part of this inspection, for focused reviews of subjects:

Name	URN	ITE Phase	Date joined partnership	Current Ofsted grade
Hampton School	102946	Secondary	September 2017	Not inspected by Ofsted
The Marist School	110152	Secondary	September 2018	Not inspected by Ofsted
King Edward's School Witley	125365	Secondary	September 2016	Not inspected by Ofsted
Frensham Heights School	125338	Secondary	September 2017	Not inspected by Ofsted
Eastbourne College	114650	Secondary	September 2020	Not inspected by Ofsted
The Cedars School	139811	Secondary	September 2017	Good
Forest Gate Community School	143274	Secondary	September 2017	Not yet inspected
Our Lady of Peace Catholic Primary and Nursery School	110035	Primary	September 2017	Good
Montem Academy	140335	Primary	September 2017	Outstanding
Kings Wood School and Nursery	133756	Primary	September 2021	Good
West Hill Park School	116551	Primary	September 2017	Not inspected by Ofsted
Glenesk School	125377	Primary	September 2020	Good
Cardinal Newman Catholic Primary School	143364	Primary	September 2020	Good
Brighton College	114614	Secondary	September 2017	Not inspected by Ofsted

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2021