

University of Cumbria

Bowerham Road, Lancaster LA1 3JD

Inspection dates

31 January to 3 February 2022

Inspection judgements

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

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

Trainees benefit from the provider's ambitious vision to tackle disadvantage. Trainees understand that removing barriers to success for the pupils in their care is a key professional responsibility. Their training prepares them well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They know how to shape the curriculum and their teaching to support the most vulnerable pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language.

Some aspects of the primary and secondary initial teacher education (ITE) programmes are particularly strong. Trainees are supported effectively to promote pupils' well-being and to keep them safe. They have an in-depth knowledge of the risks that pupils may face within their communities and in the wider world. In addition, trainees systematically gain a good grounding in how to manage pupils' behaviour. Primary trainees know the importance of early reading. They are well equipped to deliver phonics programmes and to support pupils who find reading difficult.

Leaders have high aspirations for the training programmes. They are in the process of adapting the primary and secondary ITE curriculums to meet their ambitions. However, this work is still in the early stages. It has not gained sufficient traction to align the centre- and school-based training. This leads to inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring. While trainees gain an understanding of the generic pedagogical principles of teaching, their

training to teach different subjects is uneven in quality. In some areas, subject curriculums are not as well defined as they should be. Mentors are not aware of the essential knowledge that trainees should gain by the end of the training programme. This hampers mentors from setting targets that assist trainees' progress through the primary and secondary ITE curriculums.

The large footprint of this well-established partnership means that trainees enjoy varied and diverse placements. This sets them up well for teaching within the remote areas of the region, as well as further afield. Most trainees feel welcomed and well supported during their centre- and school-based experiences. There are clear systems in place to check the quality of the training programmes. However, these systems do not provide enough assurances to leaders that the ITE curriculums across the primary and secondary programmes are being delivered as intended.

Leaders ensure that trainees build their resilience in order to deal with the demands of the role. They are equally adept at helping trainees to manage their workload. Trainees are well supported to overcome any difficulties that might prevent them from successfully completing the training programmes.

Information about this ITE partnership/provider

- In the 2021/22 academic year, the University of Cumbria partnership had 1,073 trainees across the primary and secondary phases of training.
- There were 874 trainees in the primary phase and 199 trainees in the secondary phase.
- Trainees train to teach in the primary phase through the following routes: an undergraduate three-year Bachelor of Arts with Qualified Teacher Status (BA QTS) which covers the three to 11 age-phase, an undergraduate four-year BA honours degree with QTS with an additional specialism in special educational needs and/or disabilities and inclusion, which covers the five to 11 age-phase or a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) to Masters level. This is delivered through the university or as the School Direct fee-paid route. Trainees who follow the PGCE route are trained to teach either the three to seven or the five to 11 primary age-phases.
- In the secondary phase, trainees follow the PGCE with Masters route. Over two thirds of secondary trainees follow the School Direct fee-paid route. In 2021/22, secondary trainees were enrolled on the following subject courses: art and design, biology, business studies, chemistry, computing, drama, English, geography, health and social care, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, physics, psychology and religious education.
- There are approximately 500 schools, ranging from outstanding to inadequate, across 37 local authorities in the primary partnership. There are 13 School Direct alliances that span six local authorities. The partnership covers large areas of the North West region, as well as local authorities in the London region.
- In the secondary phase, the partnership includes approximately 60 schools within eight local authorities. These schools also range from outstanding to inadequate. There are 11 School Direct alliances across Cumbria, Lancashire and Hackney.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 14 candidates, across the primary and secondary phase, on the Assessment Only route.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by eight Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted inspectors.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met a range of university staff and members of the partnership. These included: the director of education; the head of teaching, learning and student experience; the head of ITE quality and curriculum; the placement liaison manager; senior lecturers; principal lecturers; partnership programme leaders; university partnership tutors; university programme leaders; subject leaders; the health and well-being manager; members of the admissions team; members of the partnership stakeholder group; headteachers and members of school staff; School Direct representatives; partnership mentors; professional mentors and subject mentors.
- In the primary phase, inspectors completed focused reviews in early reading, phonics and English, mathematics, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages and computing. They visited six schools. Two of these visits were conducted

remotely. Inspectors spoke with 62 trainees and four early career teachers. In total, inspectors spoke to trainees and/or school staff in 24 schools.

- In the secondary phase, inspectors completed focused reviews in mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, geography, biology and chemistry. Secondary-phase inspectors visited five schools, one of these visits was completed remotely. They communicated with staff and/or trainees in a further 20 schools. Inspectors spoke to 31 trainees and eight early career teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation relating to the ITE programmes in the primary and secondary phase. This included: subject curriculum documentation, information about mentoring and assessment, records of mentor meetings and target setting, leaders' self-evaluation document and the improvement plans for the different programmes. In addition, inspectors reviewed examples of training materials, including recorded training sessions. They also observed some training taking place at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered information related to the Department for Education's initial teacher training criteria and supporting advice.
- Inspectors considered the provision for candidates following the Assessment Only route.

Primary phase report

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

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the ITE curriculums in the primary undergraduate and postgraduate phases of training, regardless of the route that trainees follow. These curriculums are in the process of being carefully shaped around the established three distinct phases of development that aim to build trainees' expertise in a logical order.

Leaders are embedding the core content framework effectively into their training curriculums. They successfully build on this minimum entitlement for all trainees. Trainees learn about aspects of each of the primary national curriculum subjects through the taught ITE curriculums. However, leaders have not made certain that all curriculums identify the essential knowledge that trainees should learn. Consequently, leaders and mentors cannot be sure that trainees are systematically gaining all of the knowledge and skills that they need to learn throughout their training programmes.

Leaders successfully ensure that all trainees understand their role in teaching pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. Trainees who specialise in this aspect of education develop a deep understanding of SEND across a wider range of educational settings, including special schools. Trainees who are trained to teach younger pupils gain a secure knowledge of children's learning and development in the early years.

All trainees gain a firm foundation in how to teach early reading and phonics through the provider's well-considered Cumbria Teacher of Reading programme. Trainees understand how to develop children's communication and language in the early years. They also successfully learn how to teach systematic synthetic phonics to pupils at the early stages of reading. They are well equipped to support pupils who find reading more challenging and need to catch up with their peers.

Leaders ensure that trainees are taught by experts. Trainees learn from staff who have appropriate specialist knowledge of curriculum subjects, SEND and primary education, including early years. Trainees are well informed of key issues about the education of pupils aged three to 11 years. This is because they are encouraged to read and debate relevant educational research.

Through wide-ranging partnerships with schools, programme leaders ensure that school placements build effectively on some aspects of the taught training curriculum. For example, trainees gain a secure grounding in how to manage pupils' behaviour, as well as developing their understanding of general pedagogy. Through effective School Direct partnerships, some trainees develop even stronger expertise in understanding early reading.

University tutors, mentors and trainees regularly review trainees' learning and development. However, because leaders have not identified in full the essential subject knowledge that trainees must learn, course tutors and mentors are not certain what should be assessed. Mentors do not have enough information about the centre-based training to ensure that school-based training reinforces key subject knowledge and skills. This leads to uneven mentoring across the partnership. It also results in mentors setting targets for trainees that pay too little attention to their subject knowledge or teaching practice across the broad range of subjects in the primary national curriculum. This does not help trainees to get the most out of their training.

There are well-established and comprehensive systems in place to quality assure aspects of the training programmes. However, these systems do not focus on how well the centre- and school-based training are aligned. As such, the information from these quality assurance activities does not provide sufficient guarantees to leaders that the ITE curriculum is being delivered as intended or having leaders' desired impact on achieving their vision for the primary ITE programmes.

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

(Information for the partnership and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not make certain that the primary ITE training curriculums clearly identify the essential knowledge that trainees should know in all primary national curriculum subjects. This means that leaders cannot be sure that the taught curriculum systematically prepares trainees to understand and teach all the subjects of the primary national curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the partnership's subject curriculums identify the key knowledge that trainees must know and remember so that they receive the highest quality training and development.
- Leaders provide mentors with too little information about the subject knowledge that trainees are taught in the centre-based training. This holds back mentors from aligning their mentoring and school-based training with what trainees learn about in the centre-based ITE curriculums. Mentors' support for trainees, including setting targets for improvement, do not focus sharply enough on improving trainees' subject knowledge. This hampers trainees' progress through the training programmes. Leaders should ensure that mentors receive the curriculum information that they need. This is so that mentors are better equipped to help trainees to know and remember more of the essential knowledge that underpins the ITE curriculums.
- Leaders' systems for quality assuring the primary ITE curriculums are not as effective as they could be. Leaders' arrangements do not systematically check how well centre- and school-based training are aligned to ensure that trainees learn all that leaders intend. Leaders should ensure that their quality assurance systems provide sufficient information to assure leaders that the ITE curriculums are being delivered as intended and that they are having the desired impact on trainees' preparedness to teach.

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

- The partnership meets the Department for Education (DfE) statutory compliance criteria in the primary phase, including the assessment-only route.

Secondary phase report

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

Leaders and partnership schools share an aspirational goal to provide consistently high-quality training for all secondary trainees, regardless of their training route. They are taking credible steps towards implementing their ambitious vision.

Leaders are in the process of ensuring that the content and structure of the secondary ITE curriculums are ambitious and broad in scope. This is so that leaders can assure themselves that the ITE curriculums are designed to enable trainees to maximise their learning and development throughout their taught programmes. However, leaders are in the early stages of ensuring that the centre- and school-based training are equally well planned and understood by mentors, course tutors and trainees.

Training sessions, which focus on generic teaching skills, and well-structured school placements, are underpinned by the core content framework. However, leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that trainees should learn across the different aspects of their secondary courses. This means that some subject-specific training sessions do not help trainees to understand how to translate the generic principles of teaching into the uniqueness of the subjects that they are training to teach. The different elements of the training programme are not sufficiently integrated across the centre- and school-based training programmes. This prevents trainees from knowing exactly what they need to learn on their ITE programmes.

Trainees are taught by subject experts. They learn some essential principles of teaching in depth, for example how to manage pupils' behaviour in class. They also learn the importance of maintaining high levels of professional behaviours. For instance, trainees understand the key role that they play in safeguarding pupils and themselves. Trainees also gain a sufficiently strong understanding of how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This is because, typically, there is close alignment between the centre- and school-based training programmes in these areas. However, this is not replicated across other important aspects of the programme. Trainees encounter wide variation in their learning about the subject-specific curriculum and pedagogy in their chosen field. This stops trainees from being as well prepared as they could be to make a successful start in their early teaching career.

Leaders want trainees to be well-informed and reflective teachers. Leaders ensure that the secondary training programmes enable trainees to gain an initial understanding of how reading, research and debate can inform practice in education. However, these professional

traits are not built on well enough, or consistently promoted across all aspects of the training programme. Mentors are not sufficiently well informed that research, debate and reflection are important aims of the programme. As a result, some mentors do not give trainees the opportunities or guidance that they need to build their understanding and practice further.

There are appropriate mechanisms in place to check and record trainees' learning. Trainees are guided by regular feedback. This helps them to know and remember some of their learning. However, the effectiveness of assessment methods, and the target-setting process, varies widely from mentor to mentor. This means that trainees do not get an appropriate balance of general and subject-specific feedback from their mentors. Consequently, some mentors are not able to support trainees in closing the gaps in their subject-specific knowledge and, in some cases, address specific weaknesses in their practice.

The quality assurance systems within the secondary phase provide leaders with some useful information about trainees' experiences. Leaders listen carefully and respond to trainees' views. Consequently, leaders are strengthening some aspects of the quality of education and training. Nonetheless, some important features of the ITE curriculums are not quality assured with sufficient depth. For example, leaders do not check on the content of centre- and school-based training programmes carefully enough to ensure that they are purposefully aligned. In addition, leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the quality and consistency of mentoring. As a result, leaders do not have all the information that they need to evaluate accurately how well trainees are supported to achieve the intended outcomes of the ITE programmes.

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

(Information for the partnership and appropriate authority)

- The ITE curriculums in the secondary phase do not explicitly identify what knowledge trainees should learn. The centre- and school-based training programmes are not purposefully aligned. They are not planned well enough to ensure that trainees, across different routes, deepen their knowledge and practice as well as they could over time. Leaders should ensure that all mentors and course tutors know the specific knowledge that trainees should learn and when they will learn it. This is so that trainees develop their expertise through coherently planned ITE curriculums across both the school- and centre-based training components of the programme.
- The effectiveness of assessment varies across mentors and schools. Consequently, the feedback that some trainees receive does not help them to identify the gaps in their knowledge and practice. This stops trainees from learning all that they could during their programmes. Leaders should ensure that all mentors and course tutors use the ITE subject curriculums as the mechanism for measuring trainees' progress through the training programme.

- The quality of mentoring across the partnership is not consistently effective. This means that some trainees do not get the experiences and input that they need to notice, understand and develop subject-specific and pedagogical knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all mentors fully understand what the provider expects trainees to experience. They should furnish mentors with the knowledge and skills that they need to ensure that all trainees benefit from high-quality general and subject-specific mentoring.
- Leaders' quality assurance systems are not used effectively enough. They do not test out how effectively the ITE curriculums are delivered and the impact that they have on trainees' learning and progress towards becoming effective teachers. This means that trainees get different experiences from centre- and school-based training. Leaders should ensure that the quality assurance systems provide a clear insight into the effectiveness of the training programmes in the secondary phase.

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

- The partnership meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria in the secondary phase, including the assessment-only route.

ITE Partnership/Provider details

Unique reference number 70128

Inspection number 10210209

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (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 Provider Higher education institution

Phases provided Primary
Secondary

Date of previous inspection 26 to 29 November 2012

Inspection team

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Annex: Provider 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	Date joined	Current Ofsted grade
Anchorsholme Primary Academy	140124	Primary	Unknown	Good
Arkholme CE Primary School	119523	Primary	Unknown	Good
Freckleton CE Primary School	119548	Primary	Unknown	Good
Morecambe and Heysham Grosvenor Park Primary School	119351	Primary	Unknown	Good
Sacred Heart RC Primary School	105243	Primary	Unknown	Outstanding
St Thomas CE Primary School	112322	Primary	Unknown	Good
The Loyne Specialist School	119892	Primary	Unknown	Good
Corpus Christi Catholic High School	119780	Secondary	Unknown	Good
Kirkbie Kendal School	136671	Secondary	Unknown	Good
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	136742	Secondary	Unknown	Good
Penwortham Girl's High School	119765	Secondary	Unknown	Outstanding
Ullswater Community College	112393	Secondary	Unknown	Requires improvement

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