

Northern Lights SCITT

Skipton Girls' High School, Gargrave Road, Skipton BD23 1QL

Inspection dates

7 to 10 March 2022

Inspection judgements

Primary and secondary age-phase combined

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education and training	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

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

Trainees on Northern Lights school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) programme find it to be caring, warm and welcoming. This is the case both at the centre and while on placement. The pastoral support that trainees receive is a strength of the partnership. Many feel that it is like a family. Trainees' confidence in leaders is well placed. Workload is well considered by leaders without lowering expectations of trainees.

Trainees have a good understanding of their responsibilities around safeguarding and managing behaviour. Course leaders plan these aspects effectively into the curriculum and ensure that school placements provide trainees with a variety of experiences. There are clear systems for communication between the partnership, mentors and trainees. This ensures that the aims and curriculum of the SCITT programme are well understood by all stakeholders. It ensures that rapid support can be put in place for trainees if needed.

Leaders help trainees to develop a clear understanding of the pedagogies and practice that are the most helpful in the classroom for the phases they will teach. This is underpinned by the effective use of recent research. This helps them to be prepared for the real-life demands of being a teacher. For example, trainees have a good understanding of how to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum also helps trainees to understand how to use assessment to check what pupils have learned and to adjust planning accordingly.

Information about this ITE partnership

- Trainees train to teach secondary-age (11 to 16 years, with a post-16 enhancement) or primary-age (five to 11 years) pupils.
- All trainees complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Education with Leeds Trinity University.

- At the time of the inspection 21 trainees were on the course. All trainees follow the SCITT route. Leaders of the partnership offer a School Direct (salaried) route, but there are currently no trainees following this route into teaching.
- The partnership is based at Skipton Girls' High School, which is part of Northern Star Academies Trust. The chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust is the accounting officer of the SCITT.
- The SCITT is currently in partnership with eight primary schools and nine secondary schools. Of the primary schools, seven were graded good at their most recent inspection and one was graded outstanding. Of the secondary schools, five were graded outstanding at their most recent inspection and four were graded good.
- The course director and course deputy director both took up post in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.
- Inspectors met with the course director and deputy director, as well as the leader with strategic oversight of the course. Inspectors also spoke with the CEO of Northern Star Academies Trust and several headteachers who have employed previous trainees from the course.
- The inspection team conducted focused reviews in early reading, history and English. They met with the subject experts or leads, scrutinised course documents and visited six schools to talk with trainees, mentors and senior leaders. They looked at evidence of trainees' learning and observed them teaching the subject being reviewed.
- Inspectors spoke with all 21 trainees, either in their schools, in virtual meetings, or at in-person meetings at the partnership.
- Inspectors took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey for trainees and 34 responses to the online survey for staff.

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

Northern Lights SCITT partnership attracts trainees with varying levels of previous experience in schools. The location of the partnership and its good reputation attract many applicants. There is clear oversight of the SCITT curriculum at strategic and operational levels. Leaders ensure that colleagues from outside the partnership are involved in designing and contributing to the course. Leaders seek, and act on, the views of trainees. Trainees value the opportunity to feed back. Leaders use this information, for example by improving the guidance that trainees are given regarding employment. Trainees are well prepared by the course for a career in teaching.

Trainees who have recently completed the course told inspectors that they had benefited from the close alignment of placement-based training and SCITT-based training. For example, they are able to learn about adapting teaching for pupils with SEND through

training and assignments delivered by SCITT leaders. Trainees then observe expert colleagues in schools before applying what they have learned.

Leaders have designed an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum underpinned by current research. It is well understood by trainees and communicated clearly to mentors. Leaders have assessed what they consider to be the most important knowledge for trainees to acquire. For example, there is a focus on planning and designing sequences of lessons. They have designed the course to build this knowledge over time.

In most subjects, leaders have made sure that the key subject content knowledge that they want trainees to learn has been carefully mapped out. In some foundation subjects in the primary phase, this work has been hampered by the effects of the pandemic. In these subjects, the knowledge that trainees develop has been driven by placements rather than course leaders. Leaders know this. Plans are in place to develop planning in these subject areas.

Primary-phase trainees have a strong understanding of how to teach children to read because this is prominent in the SCITT curriculum. Trainees understand systematic synthetic phonics. They are given regular opportunities to revisit what they have learned about teaching pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Course leaders ensure that they adapt the trainees' curriculum to account for gaps in knowledge in relation to teaching reading. This means that trainees are well prepared to teach pupils to read.

Mentors are carefully selected, and there are robust quality assurance systems in place. This helps to oversee the work of trainees on placement and ensures that there is a constant flow of information about trainees' progress between mentors, subject leaders and university tutors. Owing to this, trainees are given the right support when an issue is identified. In some cases, there is variability in the quality of targets set by mentors. For example, some targets are too task focused and do not help trainees improve consistently well. Leaders have recognised this and improvements are already under way.

Assessment of trainees is thorough. Leaders have clearly linked assessment to the taught curriculum and are in the process of ensuring that mentors fully understand how to apply this assessment framework. Assessment of case studies and written tasks ensures that both theoretical and practical progress is considered when assessing trainees' suitability to teach.

The input of senior leaders from schools across the partnership, training from subject experts and careful consideration of the early career framework help to ensure that there is variety in the training delivered. Trainees finish their training year with a good understanding of what teaching entails. Subject leaders and trainers who are part of the partnership have their expertise and qualifications carefully considered by course leaders, and trainees feel confident that they are learning from credible experts. Inspectors agree. For example, the quality of training can be seen in the trainees' detailed understanding of assessment and how it might be used to inform lesson planning and preparation.

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

(Information for the partnership and appropriate authority)

- The most important subject knowledge that trainees need in some of the primary foundation subjects is not clear enough. Course leaders should ensure that they continue to identify the most important subject knowledge that trainees need and plan for how this will be taught to trainees.
- Course leaders do not ensure that targets are precise enough to help trainees to improve their practice. Sometimes, targets set for trainees are not matched well enough to their next steps. Leaders should ensure that mentors set targets that help trainees improve. Course leaders should ensure that the quality of mentoring and target-setting is consistently strong across the partnership.
- The ITE curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned in some subject areas. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about and are making any necessary amendments in response to the pandemic. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

Does the ITE partnership primary and secondary combined phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?

- The partnership meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70315
Inspection number	10212885

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

Type of ITE partnership	SCITT
Phases provided	Primary and secondary combined
Date of previous inspection	Stage 1: 12 June 2017 Stage 2: 20 November 2017

Inspection team

Matthew Vellensworth, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marcus Newby	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Redshaw	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Partnership schools

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

Name	URN	ITE phase	Date joined	Current Ofsted grade
Bingley Grammar School	107439	Secondary	September 2016	Good
Eastwood Community School	146223	Primary	September 2016	Good
Embsay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	121559	Primary	September 2019	Good
Holycroft Primary School	143982	Primary	September 2018	Good
Skipton Girls' High School	136664	Secondary	September 2015	Outstanding
South Craven School	136736	Secondary	September 2019	Outstanding

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 1231, 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.reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022