

Cumbria Teacher Training

High Street, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4ES

Inspection dates

13 to 16 June 2022

Inspection judgements

Primary age-phase

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education and training

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

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

The overwhelming majority of trainees are positive about their training experience in this close-knit partnership. They enjoy the supportive relationships that they forge with course leaders and school-based mentors. They appreciate the effective lines of communication that exist in the partnership and they value the strong pastoral care that aids their successful completion of the programme.

Trainees gain a realistic understanding of the demands associated with teaching primary-aged pupils. They learn how to manage their workload and how to take care of their own well-being. Trainees quickly develop the professional attributes expected of teachers.

Current trainees benefit from a more cohesive training programme than was the case previously. Improved centre-based training, underpinned by pertinent research, helps trainees become familiar with most subjects in the primary-phase national curriculum. It also equips them well to manage pupils' behaviour, to keep pupils safe and to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the opportunities for trainees to build on their centre-based training while on school placements are too variable in quality. This is because leaders are at the early stages of making sure that everyone who plays a part in the training programme knows and understands what trainees must learn.

Trainees learn how to support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), but they have limited experience in applying theory to practice during their time in school.

Trainees gain a solid grounding in teaching English (including early reading and phonics), science and mathematics across the 3–11 age phase. The training programme does not provide the same bedrock when it comes to some of the foundation subjects. In particular,

trainees are not helped to understand the fundamental principles of shaping learning for children in early years.

Information about this ITE provider

- The Cumbria Teacher Training partnership provides teacher training in the primary age-phase. Trainees follow a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education programme, led by Sheffield Hallam University, towards qualified teacher status (QTS). All trainees are trained to teach the 3–11 age range.
- There were 20 trainees enrolled on the programme in the 2021/22 academic year.
- There are 14 schools in the partnership. These schools are based in West Cumbria. All of the schools in the partnership have been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- The lead school in the partnership is Victoria Road Infant and Nursery School.
- At the time of the inspection, there was one candidate on the assessment-only route.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the leader of the school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT), members of the board of directors, the business officer, course tutors, mentors, a representative from Sheffield Hallam University and a representative from the Newcastle Research School.
- Inspectors completed focused reviews in early reading and phonics, mathematics, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages, and art and design. They visited five schools. Inspectors spoke with 18 trainees and five early career teachers. In total, inspectors spoke to trainees and/or school staff in nine schools.
- Inspectors considered information related to the Department for Education (DfE) initial teacher training (ITT) criteria and supporting advice.
- Inspectors considered the provision for candidates following the assessment-only route.
- When Cumbria Teacher Training was previously inspected by Ofsted in May 2021, it was judged inadequate.

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

Through a determined and united approach, the leaders of this small SCITT have brought about many positive changes to the training programme. The course structure and content have been completely overhauled. Research, and the DfE's core content framework, both considerable shortcomings in the previous inspection report, now underpin the initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum. As a result, trainees are getting a better deal than was the case in the past.

Leaders have established firm foundations for the ITE curriculum. The overarching aims are clear. For example, carefully considered, generic pedagogical training ensures that trainees are successful in establishing positive relationships with pupils and in managing their behaviour. They are well prepared to safeguard pupils' welfare and well-being. However, the substance of what trainees will learn at the centre and how this will be built on throughout their training year is underdeveloped.

Trainees are taught by course tutors who have suitable experience and expertise. This ensures that trainees gain an overview of most subjects in the primary-phase national curriculum. Nevertheless, in the absence of clear guidance on what trainees must learn, course tutors default to what they believe to be the most useful content for training sessions. While the training on early reading and phonics, mathematics and science gets trainees off to a good start, it is of variable quality elsewhere. At times, the training for some foundation subjects is superficial. It does not ensure that trainees gain a secure understanding of the uniqueness of all the subjects that they teach.

Some aspects of the ITE curriculum are purposefully integrated. For example, the mini-placements provide an effective bridge between theory, observation, practice and reflection across a diverse range of schools. This accounts for trainees' secure knowledge in how to teach some subjects, such as systematic synthetic phonics. However, this is not replicated across the longer school placements. Mentors do not have sufficient insight into the core knowledge and skills that trainees should acquire. This prevents mentors from shaping the school-based experience to closely match trainees' needs. As a result, some trainees are not able to build on what they know and can do. Sometimes, the school-based training contradicts the centre-based training. For instance, trainees gain a secure understanding of their role in setting high ambitions for pupils with SEND, yet some trainees have to set lower expectations for this group in their planning during school placements.

School-based training places a heavy emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics at the expense of other subjects. Too often, trainees are only expected to teach one-off lessons in the foundation subjects. This hinders trainees' understanding of how to design an effective curriculum that helps pupils to know and remember more. While trainees gain an insight into teaching pupils who speak EAL, the nature of the partnership prevents them from putting their learning into practice.

While the training adequately prepares trainees to fulfil their roles as key stage 1 and key stage 2 teachers, it falls short in relation to early years. This age phase receives too little attention in the centre- and school-based training. Trainees do not gain sufficient knowledge about the principles of teaching children in early years. They are not ready to teach all of the areas of learning set out in the early years foundation stage framework.

There is confusion as to how trainees' progress through the ITE curriculum should be measured. As the substance of the curriculum is unclear, mentors fall back on measuring progress through standalone lesson observations. This often leads to vague and repetitive targets that do not enable the trainees to build their knowledge and skills as well as they should. Targets do not help trainees to develop their curriculum subject knowledge or their subject knowledge for teaching well enough over time.

Members of the partnership's board of directors have increased their oversight of the training programme. However, they rely too heavily on what they expect to be happening without seeking enough assurances that their assumptions are borne out in reality. There are systems in place to check the quality of the ITE programme, but too often they focus on compliance rather than the impact on trainees' progress. This stops leaders from identifying the short- and long-term priorities for improvement with sufficient clarity.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- The substance of the ITE curriculum is not clearly defined. This means that leaders, tutors and mentors are not sure what trainees should be learning and when this should happen. This prevents mentors from carefully shaping the school-based experiences to target the trainees' needs. Leaders must ensure that the detail of what trainees learn in subjects and the wider aspects of the ITE curriculum are fully understood by all members of the partnership.
- The content of the centre-based training sessions is variable in quality, especially in some of the foundation subjects. This leads to superficial learning and does not identify with sufficient clarity the key subject and pedagogical knowledge that trainees need to acquire to help pupils know and remember the primary curriculum. Leaders should ensure that centre-based training equips trainees with a firm footing for their school-based experiences.
- During school placements, trainees are less able to consolidate their understanding of how to teach some of the foundation subjects when compared with the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They often lack the opportunity to plan, teach and assess pupils' learning over a meaningful and well-sequenced series of lessons. Leaders must review the expectations for developing trainees' understanding of how to build pupils' knowledge through carefully ordered learning in a range of subjects.
- Mentors and trainees are confused about the systems to measure trainees' progress. This results in some targets that do not help trainees make the progress that they could in their subject or pedagogical knowledge. Leaders must review the process for assessing trainees' progress, so that mentors understand how to check trainees' journey through the ITE curriculum.
- The systems to assure the impact of the ITE programmes focus too much on compliance, rather than quality. This means that leaders do not have a well-rounded view of the strengths and weaknesses in the centre and in school-based training. Leaders should review the procedures to check the quality of the whole programme to iron out inconsistencies and to make sure that all trainees have the same entitlement to high-quality training.

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

- The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70017
Inspection number	10217252

This inspection was carried out 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 provider	School-centred initial teacher training
Phases provided	Primary
Date of previous inspection	10 to 13 May 2021

Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janette Walker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Bransty Primary School	112167	Primary
Ellenborough Academy	148870	Primary
Holme St Cuthbert Primary School	112112	Primary
Victoria Infant and Nursery School	112144	Primary
Victoria Junior School	112145	Primary

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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