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University of Hertfordshire

University of Hertfordshire, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Education, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 9AB

Inspection dates   30 January to 2 February 2023

Inspection judgements

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

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

Leaders are passionate about ensuring that all trainees are well supported in their career journey, from novices to early career teachers. They have designed an ambitious ITE curriculum that gives trainees a voice in their training. Developing trainees' resilience to respond to the challenges of teaching is a key part of the programme. This includes making sure that trainees are well prepared to identify and respond to concerns about pupils' welfare.

Most trainees feel very well supported by leaders, visiting tutors and the mentoring that they receive in schools. Trainees also like the way that staff respond swiftly to any concerns they raise. However, not all trainees receive this high-quality support from school-based mentoring. These trainees are not as fully supported to apply their learning at the university to their teaching practice.

Trainees are well supported to build their professional and subject knowledge over the duration of the course. They are given a thorough grounding in how to cater for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Trainees learn about adaptive teaching and the role this plays in ensuring that all pupils succeed. Trainees' understanding is revisited and developed as the course progresses. Similarly, trainees are introduced to behaviour management strategies right from the start. They become increasingly skilled in knowing how to create classroom environments that support learning.

A particular strength in trainees' experiences is the high-quality input from subject experts, both in the primary and secondary phases. This includes in early reading.

Information about this ITE provider

- The provider currently has 320 primary trainees and 126 secondary trainees.

- The primary phase has trainees on the School Direct (salaried or unsalaried) route, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) route, and the Undergraduate (Bachelor of Education with qualified teacher status) route.

- Trainees in the secondary phase are all on the School Direct (salaried or unsalaried) or PGCE route. The provider offers a wide range of subject specialisms in the secondary phase to support local and regional recruitment needs.

- The provider offers the assessment-only route to candidates in the primary and secondary phases. Typically, the number of candidates on this route is low, and currently, the provider only has candidates in the secondary phase.

- The provider has 550 primary and secondary partnership schools. At the time of the inspection, primary-phase trainees were placed in 219 partnership schools and secondary-phase trainees were placed in 65 partnership schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by nine of His Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.

- Inspectors met with leaders, including the dean of the school of social sciences, humanities and education, the associate dean learning and teaching, and the head of department for initial teacher education and early childhood education. Inspectors also met with the postgraduate and secondary postgraduate ITE leads, the primary undergraduate ITE lead, the primary partnership liaison lead and the vice-chancellor. In addition, meetings were held with the ITE partnership steering committee and the lead school coordinator group.

- Inspectors held meetings with trainees, school mentors, school professional mentors, subject tutors, visiting tutors and early career teachers.

- Inspectors scrutinised the provider's documentation, including information relating to improvement planning, curriculum content and compliance.

- Inspectors reviewed the responses to the trainee survey and to the staff survey.

- Inspectors spoke to 51 primary trainees and 66 secondary trainees.

- In the primary phase, focused reviews were conducted in early reading, mathematics, art and design, science, computing, geography and physical education (PE). In the secondary phase, focused reviews were conducted in English, art and design, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages and PE. Other aspects of the ITE curriculum were also considered as part of this inspection.

- Overall, inspectors spoke with 12 primary and 10 secondary placement settings.

Primary phase report

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

Leaders provide an ambitious ITE curriculum that prepares trainees well for their careers in primary teaching. The programme is based on up-to-date and relevant research, both in relation to subject content and pedagogical approaches. Leaders make sure that school placements contribute effectively to increasing trainees' readiness to teach. Trainees are supported well to apply their university-based learning about professional behaviours, the curriculum and pedagogy, including in relation to behaviour management and inclusion.

The core content framework is integrated meaningfully throughout all aspects of the curriculum, including in university-based training, reading and weekly tasks. Schools in the partnership hold the provider in high regard. School leaders appreciate the calibre of the trainees, as well as the communication provided to support trainees' time in school.

Ensuring that trainees are ready to teach all of the national curriculum subjects is a key component of the ITE programme. Through carefully chosen tasks and activities, trainees' knowledge of each subject is carefully extended and, in turn, their confidence grows. Trainees become reflective practitioners and adapt what they know to fit the context of their placement settings. This includes how to adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs and ensure that learning is remembered in the long term.

Trainees are assessed regularly and purposefully. This includes through weekly meetings with their mentors and more formally through the progress review points and assignments. Visiting tutors check how well trainees are progressing on their school placements. When needed, they carry out additional visits and secure further support for trainees. Leaders regularly seek out trainees' views on the quality of the training programme, including how well the mentoring programme guides their practice.

Leaders have restructured their approach to teaching trainees about early reading. Centre-based training makes clear the essential role that systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) plays in pupils' reading development. All trainees, regardless of route, complete a week of focused work on SSP in each stage of the training. These three weeks help to ensure that every trainee develops their knowledge of how to teach pupils to read accurately. For example, trainees learn how to match books to pupils' phonic knowledge. They also learn about the importance of automaticity in relation to working memory and fluency.

From September, leaders introduced a new programme to further improve support provided by school-based mentors. Much of the school-based mentoring programme is strong and provides trainees with high-quality guidance. However, this is not the case for some trainees. This is because the new programme is not fully established in the way that leaders intend it to be. Sometimes trainees do not receive helpful feedback and targets on how to develop and apply their understanding. Leaders do not check thoroughly enough that the mentoring programme provides a consistent experience for all trainees. They place too much emphasis on visiting tutors, mentors and trainees raising issues and concerns

themselves. This leads to a lack of sharpness in leaders' oversight of the training programme, including their work to secure improvements when needed. In part, this is because leaders have not established consistently helpful ways of recording and sharing information across the partnership about trainees' progress. Leaders have identified this and are considering how best to address this.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes trainees do not benefit from consistently high-quality support through the school-based mentoring programme. This is because leaders' recently revised programme is not fully embedded. When the quality of the programme is less consistent, trainees receive targets that are too broad or targets that do not align closely with the taught curriculum. This means that trainees are not supported sufficiently well to strengthen their practice and apply theories and content learned at the university to their school settings. Leaders should take suitable steps to ensure that the mentoring programme provides consistent and high-quality guidance to all trainees.

- At times, systems and procedures to check the quality of school-based mentoring do not help leaders to proactively and systematically identify where improvements could be made. Leaders should continue their work to implement appropriate procedures and systems to ensure and assure the quality of the school-based mentoring programme. This includes making sure that they establish effective ways of recording and joining up information on trainees' progress on school-based placements.

Does the ITE provider's primary phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?

- The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

Secondary phase report

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

The University of Hertfordshire ITE programme is thoroughly planned and carefully sequenced. This ensures that the curriculum is ambitious and provides trainees with the knowledge and skills to teach their chosen subject effectively. The programme complies fully with the minimum entitlement of the core content framework.

Leaders' clarity of vision and purpose means that the centre-based programmes are structured effectively. These include the essential subject knowledge and skills that leaders want trainees to develop. Behaviour management is a key part of the curriculum, running alongside, and integrated with, subject pedagogical knowledge, curriculum design and how to assess pupils' learning. This is a significant strength of the University's ITE curriculum because it ensures that the theory is linked explicitly to the classroom.

Trainees explore up-to-date research as an integral part of their studies. For example, they develop their understanding of cognitive load theory and adaptive teaching, particularly in relation to supporting pupils with SEND. As a result, trainees have a secure understanding of how to plan for and meet different learning needs. This work flows seamlessly through to the subject-specific part of the curriculum, with trainees studying credible and up-to-date research about learning in their subject and applying it to the classroom.

Communication between the university and schools is strong. Leaders have built constructive working relationships with teacher mentors and professional mentors. This ensures that the university-based training and the school-based programme work together. For example, the use of formative assessment to support learning is reinforced by both subject leaders and teacher mentors.

School mentors meet with trainees weekly to discuss their progress and set targets for the following week. For the most part, these reflect, and build on, the work trainees cover in the university-based training. Weekly newsletters play a role in ensuring that teacher mentors and professional mentors address pertinent issues. This helps to ensure that the two parts of the training, university and school, provide a joined-up programme.

Despite these strengths, the quality of the school-based mentoring programme is not consistently strong. In a few cases, mentoring does not provide trainees with precise enough feedback on what aspects of their practice they need to improve. This results in some trainees being set targets that are not rigorous enough. University leaders have already identified this as a priority and a new training programme for teacher mentors began in September.

The procedures for assuring trainees' experience ensure that they receive a high-quality experience. Visiting tutors, subject tutors and professional mentors all play a crucial role in checking that trainees are learning the intended curriculum and making the progress that

they need to be successful. In addition, they ensure that trainees' mental health and well-being are prioritised.

Leaders ensure that the assessment-only route complies fully with requirements.

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

[Information for the provider and appropriate authority]

■ Leaders' new programme to support school-based mentors is not fully embedded. This means that in a few cases, mentoring does not provide trainees with precise enough feedback on what aspects of their practice that they need to improve. This results in some trainees being set targets that are unclear or insufficiently demanding. University leaders need to ensure that the mentoring programme consistently provides highly effective feedback that identifies for trainees the areas that they need to develop.

Does the ITE provider's secondary phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?

■ The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70029
Inspection number	10257342

This inspection was carried out 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	25 November to 28 November 2013

Inspection team

Mark Smith, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Colenso, Phase lead inspector (primary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Brian Oppenheim, Phase lead inspector (secondary)	Ofsted Inspector
Alice Clay, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Annabel Davies, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gary Rawlings, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Wright, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Strong, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sacha Husnu-Beresford, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Samantha Ingram, team inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Malvern Way Infant School	117133	Primary
Walkern Primary School	117154	Primary
Peartree Spring Primary	117206	Primary
Howe Dell Primary School	117220	Primary
Hollybush Primary School	117263	Primary
Woolenwick Infant School	117323	Primary
Brockswood Primary School	117349	Primary
Hatfield Community Free School	138201	Primary
Whipperley Infant Academy	139219	Primary
Jupiter Primary School	140955	Primary
De Havilland Primary School	148040	Primary
Chater Infant School	117159	Primary
Watford Grammar School for Girls	136289	Secondary
Watford Grammar School for Boys	136276	Secondary
Haileybury Turnford	142051	Secondary
Ashlyns School	117578	Secondary
Tring School	138352	Secondary
Nobel School	117530	Secondary
The Thomas Alleyne Academy	140037	Secondary
Barclay Academy	144623	Secondary
Goffs Academy	137532	Secondary
Queen's School	136877	Secondary