

University of Cumbria

Paternoster Row, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8TB

Inspection dates

30 January to 3 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	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

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

Leaders ensure that addressing disadvantage is a golden thread that runs through all of the programmes on offer. Trainees benefit from well-structured curriculums, based on pertinent research, that are expertly delivered. They develop a clear focus on supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable pupils. Leaders are involved in developing the Morecambe Bay curriculum to support the local area. They run programmes to increase teacher supply in places where this is pressured, such as in Tower Hamlets (and surrounding boroughs) in London.

Trainees are very well prepared for teaching by this partnership. They learn to manage pupils' behaviour effectively. The training programme helps trainees to recognise the importance of keeping pupils safe and promoting pupils' well-being. Trainees learn about some of the barriers that pupils may face to their learning. This includes the barriers faced by some pupils who speak English as an additional language. Most trainees feel well supported on placements and when at university. Trainees develop strategies to maintain a healthy work-life balance to make them ready for life in school.

Course leaders have planned their curriculums with precision. Trainees learn how to teach their phase and subject well. The knowledge that leaders want trainees to gain is clearly mapped out, comprehensive and logical. Trainees, in turn, learn how to plan and deliver curriculums to pupils effectively. This includes early reading for primary trainees.

Trainees benefit from close working relationships between university staff and school leaders and mentors. There is a joined-up approach to delivering the curriculum. Communication between trainees, schools and tutors is strong.

Information about this ITE provider

- In the 2022/23 academic year, the University of Cumbria partnership had 856 trainees across the primary and secondary phases of training.
- There were 699 trainees in the primary phase and 157 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 SEND and inclusion, which covers the five to 11 age-phase or a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) to Master's level. This is delivered through the university or as the School Direct fee-paid route. Trainees who follow the PGCE route teach either the three to seven or five to 11 primary age-phases.
- In the secondary phase, trainees follow the PGCE to Master's level. This is delivered through the university or as the School Direct fee-paid route. In 2022/23, secondary trainees were enrolled on the following subject courses: art and design, biology, business studies, chemistry, computing, drama, design and technology, English, economics, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages (MFL), music, physical education (PE), physics, psychology, religious education (RE) and social sciences.
- Overall, there are approximately 500 schools, ranging from outstanding to inadequate, across 37 local authorities in the 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 in eight local authorities. These schools span from outstanding to inadequate. There are 10 School Direct alliances that span four local authorities.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 14 candidates, across the primary and secondary phases, on the assessment-only route.

Information about this inspection

- When the University of Cumbria was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2022, it was judged to require improvement.
- The inspection was carried out by seven of His Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted inspectors.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met a range of university staff and members of the partnership. These included: the director of the institute of education; the head of teaching, learning and student experience; the head of portfolio development and

student recruitment; 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 art and design, early reading and phonics, English, geography, history, mathematics, MFL and music. They visited 10 schools. Inspectors spoke with 42 trainees and eight early career teachers. In total, inspectors spoke to trainees and/or school staff in 26 schools, including those linked to the Lancaster, Carlisle and Tower Hamlets sites. Inspectors visited three centre-based taught sessions where they talked to university staff and trainees.
- In the secondary phase, inspectors completed focused reviews in art and design, chemistry, drama, English, PE and RE. Secondary inspectors visited six schools. They communicated with staff and/or trainees in a further 18 schools. Inspectors spoke with 19 trainees and six early career teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation relating to the ITE programmes in the primary and secondary phases. 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.
- 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 curriculum in the primary undergraduate and postgraduate phases of training. Being the champions of those who face adversity or disadvantage is prioritised in all aspects of leaders' work. This is regularly cited as the single most compelling reason for trainees choosing the course. In addition, trainees are able to become familiar with a wide range of SEND.

Course leaders work with their partnership to plan and deliver a well-sequenced ITE curriculum. Since the last inspection, leaders have spent appropriate time reflecting on and reviewing the curriculum offer. The ITE curriculum is designed around each subject and the precise content has been carefully considered. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is informed by relevant and recent research. The cyclical design of the taught content and the staged expectations, which are used throughout each course, mean that trainees build subject knowledge and teaching expertise well. Trainees are supported to reflect on their own knowledge through the use of subject audits.

Leaders prepare trainees well to teach a wide range of subjects. Leaders prioritise the development of trainees' knowledge and understanding of phonics and early reading. All trainees are taught how to teach systematic synthetic phonics. They are given opportunities to watch expert colleagues teach it. Subject experts in mathematics teach trainees how to assess pupils effectively. This enables trainees to consider how to check what pupils are taught and to prepare suitable activities for the next steps in their learning. Other subjects, such as history, are also taught well by expert colleagues across the partnership. Leaders ensure that trainees revisit their curricular knowledge. This enables them to build curriculum and teaching expertise appropriate to their needs. As such, trainees become increasingly confident and competent in teaching all subjects across the national curriculum.

Trainees are well informed about safeguarding. Trainees, partnership schools and employing headteachers comment positively on trainees' insight in this regard. Leaders ensure that trainees are well equipped to impart these responsibilities before starting each school placement. The course complies fully with the requirements of the core content framework, adding an even greater focus on tackling disadvantage.

Trainees practise what they are learning on the course through carefully selected school placements. School-based mentors and university placement tutors work cohesively to build trainees' learning and development while they are on placement. Trainees gain comprehensive experience and professional insight through a diverse range of placements. Leaders track trainees' progress through the course well. They provide trainees with timely additional support when needed. There is some work to do to align what is taught at the centre and on placements even more closely.

University placement tutors work with mentors and school leaders to ensure that trainees receive timely guidance. Leaders build purposeful relationships with partner schools. They provide mentors with a well-considered programme of training. This is helping many mentors to become more skilled in their role. They enable trainees to reflect on their practice and set targets that support their development. Trainees value this. Leaders are mindful that some mentors are less skilled in their role and have plans in place to further develop mentors' effectiveness, including through the use of technology.

Leaders have enhanced quality assurance processes. These processes help them to promptly identify if a trainee needs additional help and to put extra support in place. Leaders deploy subject quality coordinators to check that the ITE curriculum is being delivered as intended. This work is improving the quality of the ITE curriculum.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- There is variation in the quality of mentoring. For example, some mentors do not give trainees sufficiently clear targets on how to improve their teaching and subject expertise. Leaders should accelerate their mentor development strategy so that trainees benefit from consistently high-quality mentoring.
- Centre-based provision and trainee placements are joined-up and mostly allow trainees to practise what they have learned in central provision. However, occasionally, opportunities are missed for trainees to build on what they have learned at the centre in schools. Leaders should continue to strengthen purposeful alignment across primary programmes.

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?

Leaders have developed a well-structured curriculum. They ensure that the core content framework is taught in full. The ITE curriculum has clear moral purpose. Leaders maintain focus on developing trainees' understanding of the additional challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils. Headteachers who have employed previous trainees speak highly about this strand of the curriculum. They told inspectors that it prepares trainees well for the realities of teaching in challenging contexts. Inspectors agree.

Leaders have worked effectively together to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is ambitious and coherently structured. Subject leaders know their subjects well. Credible and pertinent research is introduced to trainees early and frequently revisited. Leaders ensure that trainees' generic teaching knowledge is built upon in subject-specific 'pedagogy for learning' (PFL) sessions. These two elements of the curriculum work together cohesively. They build trainees' knowledge and help them to apply this in their chosen subject specialism.

Leaders make sure that tutors and subject leaders are experts in their fields. Trainees benefit from strong subject-specific training. Leaders develop trainees' understanding and expertise in managing pupils' behaviour well. There is a focus on pupil well-being. Trainees develop their understanding of assessment strategies effectively.

Lines of communication across the various partnership are generally strong. In most cases, leaders ensure that stakeholders have sufficient information about the curriculum. For example, leaders provide subject handbooks to subject mentors so that they know what has been covered in the centre-led curriculum. These handbooks include suggested school-based activities for mentors and trainees to carry out in school to reinforce what they have learned from PFL sessions. However, not all mentors make good use of this information. Some subject mentors miss opportunities to consolidate trainees' learning from aspects of the centre-led curriculum.

After the previous inspection, leaders rightly made the improvement of mentor training a priority. This training programme gives mentors valuable information while being considerate of their other work commitments. A new programme of online training, available at any time, has been very well received. Mentors spoken with were universally positive about this approach. Assessment systems are well designed and used efficiently by mentors. However, some of the targets set for trainees by mentors lack precision. While some individual mentors have received support to address this, there remains inconsistency in the targets set by mentors. New training is already being developed by leaders to address this.

Leaders and mentors assess trainees' development effectively. They use this information to support individual trainees and to reflect on the quality of the ITE curriculums. What is more, leaders have developed a new quality assurance framework. These new processes

are strong and used effectively. Leaders use their own observations and the views of trainees to get a clear picture of the quality of the programmes. Where issues are identified, well-targeted action is taken without delay.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- There are occasions when mentors set targets for trainees that lack precision. For example, some targets around developing teaching expertise do not consider the subject specialism that trainees are studying. This results in trainees sometimes having insufficient knowledge of the specific steps that they need to take in order to develop their expertise. Leaders should train mentors to set targets for trainees that are clear, specific and, where relevant, linked to their subject specialism.
- Communication between university staff and school is not consistently effective. Some mentors are not sufficiently aware of the centre-based curriculum and this reduces their ability to reinforce important messages. Leaders should strengthen the lines of communication between course leaders and subject mentors so that all trainees are consistently supported to develop their subject-specific knowledge.

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	70128
Inspection number	10261674

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	31 January to 3 February 2022

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Marcus Newby, Phase lead inspector (primary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Graham Findlay, Phase lead inspector (secondary)	His Majesty's Inspector
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James Duncan	His Majesty's Inspector
Janet Keefe	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Thomas	His Majesty's Inspector
Katherine Spurr	His Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Applebee Wood Community Specialist School	119880	Primary
Carnforth Christ Church, Church of England, Voluntary Aided Primary School	119522	Primary
Christ The King Catholic Academy	141288	Primary
Garstang Community Primary School	112190	Primary
Heron Hill Primary School	119749	Primary
Milnthorpe Primary School	112184	Primary
Nether Kellet Community Primary School	119141	Primary
Old Hutton CE Primary School	112263	Primary
St Marks CE Primary School	112325	Primary
Thornton-Cleveleys Red Marsh School	119897	Primary
Broughton High School	119759	Secondary
Dallam School	137205	Secondary
Garstang Community Academy	137342	Secondary
Longridge High School	119749	Secondary
Our Lady's Catholic College	119798	Secondary
Queen Elizabeth School	136357	Secondary
Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy	136731	Secondary

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