

St. Joseph's College Stoke Secondary Partnership

St Joseph's College, London Road, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 5NT

Inspection dates

9 May to 12 May 2023

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 provider?

All trainees speak highly of their training experience and would strongly recommend the provider to others. They say that staff in the partnership 'are invested in each and every one of us'. Trainees feel well supported by their placement schools and have nothing but praise for their mentors.

Trainees' knowledge of safeguarding is well developed as this aspect is revisited regularly. Scenarios and 'What would you do if..?' questions help trainees learn how to deal with incidents and concerns. Behaviour management is front and centre in the programme. This helps trainees prepare for the realities of the classroom. Trainees particularly value training which provides them with practical strategies to use in their practice.

Trainees successfully learn how to identify any further support needed for specific groups of pupils and how to adapt their teaching for them. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders ensure that all trainees, including secondary, secure the knowledge they need to teach early reading and phonics.

Communication between the provider and schools is strong. Weekly memos ensure that both trainees and mentors have the essential information they need to stay on track to complete the course.

The partnership carefully manages the demands of the programme for trainees, alongside

steadily building a realistic view of life in the classroom.

Information about this ITE provider

- Since the last inspection, the provider has extended its initial teacher education programme to include primary phase training. This phase was added in September 2019.
- This school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) is based at St Joseph's College.
- The provider currently works with 14 school settings. This consists of seven primary schools and seven secondary schools. All are based in Stoke-on-Trent.
- There are six trainees in the primary phase and 19 in the secondary phase.
- All trainees who complete their programme achieve Qualified Teacher Status. Primary phase trainees qualify to teach ages five to 11. Secondary phase trainees qualify to teach ages 11 to 16.
- All current trainees are following the School Direct route and paying fees.
- Schools in which trainees are placed are rated from requires improvement to outstanding by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two of His Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.
- Inspectors met with the SCITT director and other senior leaders, including school leaders who oversee the primary phase, school mentors, professional mentors, subject tutors and senior leaders involved in the partnership.
- Inspectors also spoke with members of the strategic board and members of St Joseph's governing body sub-committee.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation linked to the training programme, such as the partnership handbook, curriculum documents, training materials and trainee assessments. They also considered leaders' own self-evaluation and minutes of strategic board and governing body sub-committee meetings.
- Inspectors conducted focused reviews for the primary phase in early reading, mathematics and science. In the secondary phase, focused reviews included English, chemistry and physical education.
- Inspectors visited four primary schools and three secondary schools. During these visits, they sampled lessons, observed trainee feedback and held discussions with senior leaders, school mentors, professional mentors and trainees.
- In total, the team spoke with 15 trainees, 13 mentors and eight early career teachers as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted surveys for staff and trainees completed during the inspection. Inspectors met with leaders to check the partnership's conformity with the ITE compliance criteria and looked at records of

safeguarding checks.

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

There is a strong sense of ownership and pride in this SCITT programme from all involved. The provider and school leaders work constructively together and are united in their commitment to producing a high-quality, well-trained and effective workforce in the local area. Together, leaders have designed an ITE curriculum that is ambitious and particularly effective in promoting the core content framework. It is context driven and constructed to ensure trainees are fully immersed in school practice from day one.

The curriculum is coherent, well sequenced and central to trainees' learning. It enables trainees to build their learning in what trainees describe as 'bite-size chunks'. This avoids cognitive overload and is considerate of workload. Subject- and phase-specific sessions add significantly to trainees' knowledge. All trainees learn the importance of teaching early reading and phonics. Primary trainees are competent in delivering daily sessions, and secondary trainees learn how to support weaker readers.

Leaders ensure that the programme aligns closely with placement-based learning. Trainees follow up and apply the weekly taught content immediately in their school practice. Leaders also provide as much breadth and depth of experience in the time available. For example, primary trainees teach in at least four different year groups. All trainees extend their knowledge through visits to other phase settings, the early years, special schools and alternative providers.

Leaders gather regular feedback from trainees and schools. They respond swiftly to this and have made adaptations to the programme as a result. However, actions appear to be reactive rather than proactive in improving the programme, as leaders have not identified their current or future key priorities. As a result, partnership members, including those on the strategic board and governing body sub-committee, are unclear on the strategic direction of the SCITT.

Mentors play a vital part in the partnership's success. They understand the purpose and importance of their role and support trainees in applying and deepening their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Mentors ensure that their weekly discussions with trainees are focused on targets set and linked to central training. SCITT leaders provide regular training and support for mentors. However, while mentors feel valued, systems to provide them with constructive feedback are underdeveloped.

Leaders have devised a thorough and well-thought-through assessment programme for trainees. This is founded on continual formative assessment through school placement. The ongoing formative assessment focuses on the extent to which trainees are gaining and using the taught curriculum. While systems are in place, the quality assurance of this formative approach, via the online resource, is not consistently applied. This leads to variance in the quality and quantity of trainee evidence.

Trainees receive weekly training input from a range of expert colleagues and speakers. Trainers are credible and knowledgeable in their fields. Leaders maintain close oversight of taught sessions. However, like mentors, trainers receive limited feedback on the quality of their input.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not pinpointed the actions needed to secure ongoing improvement in their ITE programme. As a result, they are unclear on how to strengthen provision or measure the impact of initiatives implemented. Leaders should analyse all information gathered to identify actions needed to further improve trainees' quality of education and training and share these with all those involved in the partnership so that there is a clear direction and improved accountability.
- Leaders have not evaluated some aspects of the quality assurance systems in place sufficiently to detect where gaps exist. These aspects include providing feedback to mentors and trainers and submission of trainee documentation to the online portal. As a result, there is variation and inconsistency in these aspects. Leaders should ensure that there are systematic procedures in place to check the quality of training and mentoring and that there is parity in the evidence of work submitted by trainees.

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

- The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70243
Inspection number	10252547

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	School-centred initial teacher training
Phases provided	Primary and secondary combined
Date of previous inspection	11 June and 19 November 2018

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, Lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Henrick	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Gill	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Placement schools and colleges

Inspectors visited the following schools and colleges as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Ash Green Primary Academy	142990	Primary
St Augustine's Catholic Academy	140296	Primary
St Gregory's Catholic Academy	140297	Primary
St Maria Goretti	140298	Primary
St Joseph's College	136460	Secondary
St Margaret Ward	140149	Secondary
The Excel Academy	140633	Secondary

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