

University of Exeter

St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU

Inspection dates

9 to 12 May 2023

Inspection judgements

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

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

Trainees find the University of Exeter to be a great place to learn how to teach. They are inspired by the exceptionally strong subject knowledge of university staff. This, along with the long-standing tradition of academic rigour and educational research at Exeter, enables trainees to deepen their knowledge in their subjects very well.

The rich programme of lectures and practical seminars ensures that trainees are well prepared for the realities of becoming an early career teacher, including in managing their workload. Trainees learn how to adapt their teaching to respond to pupils' needs. This includes teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Many trainees thrive. Most receive exceptionally strong care and support from university staff and staff on teaching placements. Trainees value completing placements in contrasting schools. Expert coaching and mentoring ensure that trainees become highly insightful when evaluating their teaching strengths and can focus on the areas requiring further development. As a result, trainees become resilient and self-assured in their ability to teach.

Primary-phase trainees receive exceptional preparation to teach the full primary age-phase and early years curriculums, as appropriate to the age range of their course. Many develop a subject specialism, and all become competent at teaching early reading, including

through systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). Secondary-phase trainees receive a firm grounding in the subjects they teach. They are well prepared for employment.

Information about this ITE provider

- The provider currently has 244 trainees, comprising 122 primary-phase and 122 secondary-phase trainees. All trainees study for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Trainees study through the Exeter Partnership PGCE or a School Direct (non-salaried) PGCE. There are two routes in the School Direct pathway. These are School Direct @Exeter and School Direct Distance (SDD).
- There are 68 primary-phase trainees on the Exeter Partnership PGCE route. This allows trainees to specialise in English, art, humanities, modern foreign languages (MFL) or science or to take a more generalist teaching and learning route. With the exception of art and MFL, which prepare trainees to teach the 7–11 age range, all other Exeter Partnership PGCE routes prepare trainees for the 5–11 age range.
- There are 54 primary-phase trainees studying through a School Direct (non-salaried) PGCE route. Of these, 53 are studying through the SDD route. Five of these trainees specialise in SEND and six trainees specialise in the 3–7 age range. One trainee is studying through the School Direct @Exeter route.
- There are 90 secondary-phase trainees on the Exeter Partnership PGCE route and 25 trainees studying on the School Direct @Exeter route. These trainees can specialise in English, history, mathematics, German, Spanish, French, physical education, biology, biology with psychology, chemistry, physics or religious education. There are seven trainees studying through the SDD route. These trainees specialise in art, dance, drama, geography, music or social sciences.
- The provider has 196 partnership schools in the South West region stretching from Penzance to Bournemouth and up to Bridgwater. There are currently 56 primary schools and 63 secondary schools working in partnership for the Exeter Partnership PGCE route, along with 77 schools working through School Direct (non-salaried) PGCE partnerships. The provider also works in partnership with a small number of schools in London.
- All trainees follow the 'Exeter model of initial teacher education'. The Exeter model has an explicit theoretical framework that underpins teacher education and training.
- The schools in the partnership have been judged as outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate by Ofsted or good by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. At the time of the inspection, two partner school were graded inadequate by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- When Exeter University initial teacher education (ITE) provision was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2017, it was judged as outstanding in the primary age-phase and the secondary age-phase.
- The inspection team consisted of five His Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors.

- Inspectors spoke with the head of ITE, the primary- and secondary-phase programme directors, the partnership director and other staff who arrange partnerships with schools.
- Meetings also took place with a number of subject programme leaders from primary- and secondary-phase courses. In addition, leaders met with university tutors, ITE coordinators and school-based mentors.
- An inspector talked with the vice-chancellor's representative and three representatives from the school of education (SOE), including the head of the SOE. Meetings took place with the strategic implementation and planning group and primary- and secondary-phase management representatives, and leaders responsible for SEND, EAL, equality and diversity, and mentoring.
- Inspectors spoke to 22 primary-phase trainees, 29 secondary-phase trainees and 17 early career teachers. Some of these discussions took place remotely.
- In the primary phase, focused reviews were conducted in early reading, mathematics, religious education, art and science.
- In the secondary phase, focused reviews were conducted in English, mathematics, physical education, history, religious education and the sciences (this included biology, physics and chemistry).
- Inspectors visited 10 primary-phase placement settings and 12 secondary-phase placements settings. Two of these visits were conducted remotely.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation from ITE leaders and staff, including subject, phase and route curriculum plans, trainees' assignments, trainees' electronic individual development portfolios, mentoring records, policies, safeguarding arrangements, trainee placement information, and staff development and self-evaluation documentation.
- Inspectors also reviewed information relating to the Department for Education (DfE) initial teacher training criteria and supporting evidence.

Primary phase report

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

The quality of education and training in the primary phase is exceptional. Trainees develop detailed knowledge and skills across the ITE curriculum. This knowledge is routinely and skilfully applied by trainees to their professional practice.

Leaders from across the partnership work together successfully to design and implement the highly ambitious and effective ITE curriculum, which is informed by research, theory and practice. The core content framework (CCF) is a starting point when reviewing the curriculum. There are many examples where the ITE curriculum goes beyond the CCF. Leaders consistently ensure that trainees become research-informed, reflective practitioners.

The ITE curriculum builds trainees' knowledge and practice over time exceptionally well. They learn how to manage pupils' behaviour skilfully. Important concepts, such as children's development, including in early years, are seamlessly woven through the curriculum. This results in trainees identifying pupils' prior knowledge against the early years foundation stage statutory framework and national curriculum with great confidence. They learn extremely well how to identify and support pupils with SEND and pupils who speak EAL. By the end of the course, trainees have a deep knowledge and understanding of teaching adaptations they can make to meet the needs of pupils.

Whichever route into teaching that trainees are on, course leaders ensure that early reading is a priority and is very well implemented. Through centre-based and school-based training, trainees develop a very secure understanding of SSP. They learn how to identify gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge and skilfully plan and teach catch-up sessions to help close the gaps. Trainees report that they are given early reading and mathematics tasks that guarantee that they know how to use formative assessment effectively.

Leaders frequently check trainees' knowledge through a wide range of assessment strategies to assure themselves that trainees are learning the intended ITE curriculum. Centre-based staff are quick to identify when trainees require additional assistance and always support these trainees remarkably well.

School-based mentors speak very highly of the clear lines of communication and support available from the university. For example, they use the 'mentor zone' to engage actively with, and contribute to, the success of the partnership's work. Through professional development groups, centre-based staff work closely with placement schools. This enhances mentors' subject-specific knowledge. In turn, this prepares trainees to teach the range and depth of subjects in the primary phase exceedingly well.

Partnership leaders share a vision of excellence. They always action their high expectations for consistent and effective ITE provision and training. Trainees learn how to manage their workload and recognise the importance of asking for help. Leaders' quality assurance activities continually improve staff knowledge. Consequently, staff are well informed and highly knowledgeable.

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 secondary-phase curriculum is ambitious. It sets out the knowledge that trainees should learn and covers all the elements of the CCF, with many examples where the ITE curriculum goes beyond this. The strong systems, methodologies and research that underpin the secondary ITE curriculum are well respected across the partnership and beyond. Leaders in partner schools recognise the high calibre of Exeter trainees and value the up-to-date ideas they bring. Partnership leaders respond to the needs of local schools, addressing regional recruitment challenges through their long-term strategic plans.

In subject groups, trainees engage critically with relevant debates and pedagogy. University subject tutors are experts in their field. They are active contributors to educational research and provide a powerhouse of knowledge for trainees. Many trainees have a high regard for the subject-specific tuition they receive and the strong impact it has on their practice and preparedness to teach. Typically, trainees learn the intended knowledge set out in the ITE curriculum well. However, in a few subjects on the SDD route, particularly when trainees do not have university-based tutors with the same level of expertise, a minority of trainees do not benefit from the same subject-rich training and experience.

Mentoring is of a consistently high quality. Trainees value the different perspectives brought by their lead mentors, who provide day-to-day coaching, and their reflective mentors, who help them to appreciate the ways in which they are developing over time. Centre-based staff use an array of thoughtfully designed tools and assessment systems to connect trainees' centre-based learning with their practice in schools. They support mentors to use these to best effect. This ensures that school-based and centre-based tutors have live information on trainees' achievements.

Trainees are confident to assess the proficiency of pupils who speak EAL and provide support. Trainees develop their understanding of the barriers to learning arising from pupils' SEND well. Even so, some trainees would welcome still more opportunities to practise different approaches to meeting pupils' needs.

Trainees consolidate their teaching practice across contrasting placements. This, combined with valuable guidance on employability, prepares trainees well for their first teaching post. All trainees are encouraged to think of themselves as prospective leaders. There are effective systems in place to support trainees with any difficulties that arise.

Leaders' approach to gathering the views of trainees and school- and centre-based staff is meticulous. The university's visiting tutor brings the reflections of the different participants together to improve the trainee experience. Although leaders hold rich evidence about the

overall quality of trainees' experience, at times, they do not respond to this information as quickly as they could to support trainees on placement.

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

Information for the provider and appropriate authority

- A small minority of trainees do not receive the focused subject support that they need. This means that it takes these trainees longer to build their confidence to teach well. Leaders should ensure that trainee experiences are of a consistently high quality across all subjects.

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	70024
Inspection number	10249900

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	Higher education institution
Phases provided	Primary Secondary
Date of previous inspection	22 May and 16 October 2016

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lydia Pride, Phase lead inspector (secondary phase)	His Majesty's Inspector
Marie Thomas, Phase lead inspector (primary phase)	His Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barraclough	His Majesty's Inspector
Dale Burr	His Majesty's Inspector
Iain Freeland	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Hanrahan	Ofsted Inspector
Emily Henry	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Starcross Primary School	147644	Primary
Broadclyst Community Primary School	136280	Primary
Cranbrook Education Campus	141514	Primary
Kingfisher Primary School	142326	Primary
Christow Primary School	138733	Primary
The Beacon Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School	113430	Primary
Halberton Primary School	113338	Primary
Stoke Canon Church of England Primary School and Pre-School	113367	Primary
Stoke Hill Junior School	113087	Primary
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School	144985	Primary
St Peter's Church of England Aided School	113553	Secondary
Uffculme School	136287	Secondary
The King's School	136673	Secondary
Exmouth Community College	136612	Secondary
Notre Dame RC School	140737	Secondary
Holyrood Academy	136295	Secondary
Colyton Grammar School	136366	Secondary
Millfield School	123911	Secondary
Ivybridge Community College	136336	Secondary
Clyst Vale Community College	136638	Secondary
Churston Ferrers Grammar School Academy	136388	Secondary
Torquay Girls Grammar School	136506	Secondary

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