

Bluecoat SCITT Alliance Nottingham

Maid Marian Way, Nottingham NG1 6AB

Inspection dates

22 to 25 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?

Trainees are very positive about their experience of training to teach with this provider. They benefit from a programme that is well thought through. Trainees learn the 'fundamentals', using up-to-date thinking about how pupils learn. Opportunities to 'dive deeper' and 'go beyond' help trainees to develop and apply their practice.

Primary trainees are well prepared to teach the full range of national curriculum subjects, including early reading and phonics. Expert leaders develop secondary trainees' specialist subject and pedagogical knowledge. Trainees frequently reflect on how they can improve their practice.

A strong culture of equality and inclusion permeates all parts of the programme. Trainees learn how to be ambitious for all pupils. They are well prepared to teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Specialist placements enhance trainees' knowledge of how to support these pupils. Trainees develop a good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Centre- and school-based leaders work together very effectively. Their complementary approach helps trainees to manage their workload. Trainees appreciate how leaders go the extra mile to prepare them for the rigours of teaching. As one trainee explained, 'The course has challenged and pushed me to be the best version of myself.'

Information about this ITE provider

- The Bluecoat SCITT Alliance Nottingham partnership opened in September 2015. It provides initial teacher training for both primary and secondary education phases.

- The provider is part of the Archway Learning Trust, a multi-academy trust based in Nottingham City. The lead school is Bluecoat Aspley Academy.
- The provider currently has 27 trainees. There are six trainees on the primary programme who are training to teach pupils aged five to 11 years. There are 21 trainees on the secondary programme. They are training to teach pupils aged 11 to 16 years or aged 14 to 19 years, depending on each trainee's subject specialism.
- There are 19 schools in the partnership, across four local authorities. At the time of the inspection, there were trainees completing placements in 10 of these schools.
- The provider offers school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT). Trainees work towards qualified teacher status. All trainees follow the School Direct route, either fee-paying or salaried. Most trainees also opt to study for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. This is accredited by Sheffield Hallam University.
- The provider works with a range of primary and secondary schools of different sizes that are located in varying contexts. The schools were judged outstanding, good or requires improvement at their previous Ofsted inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two of His Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.
- Inspectors met with the director of the SCITT and other members of the leadership team, including the primary and secondary phase leaders and the business manager. The lead inspector met with seven representatives of the SCITT's strategic governance board.
- Inspectors spoke with 18 current trainees and nine former trainees from both the primary and secondary age-phases.
- Inspectors carried out focused reviews of reading and the foundation subjects in the primary phase. Inspectors carried out focused reviews of chemistry, mathematics and religious education in the secondary phase.
- Inspectors visited eight schools to meet with trainees, mentors, initial teacher training coordinators and headteachers. These visits included observations of trainees' teaching.
- Inspectors checked the partnership's conformity with the ITE compliance criteria and looked at records of safeguarding checks.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation linked to the training programme, including curriculum plans, training materials, information about trainee assessment, partnership policies, self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for initial teacher education. These included 25 responses from current trainees and 41 responses from staff.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum, rooted in the provider's values of 'excellence, collaboration and inclusion'. Strong links with nearby primary and secondary schools help leaders understand the local context and respond to changing recruitment needs. Leaders often review the training programme to make sure that it remains suitable. The SCITT has a long-established reputation among local schools for preparing trainees very well to join the teaching profession.

Leaders pay close attention to how the programme is organised. They ensure that each aspect is underpinned by the most up-to-date pedagogical research and thinking. The programme easily meets the requirements of the Department for Education's core content framework.

The core curriculum is carefully considered. Trainees start by learning the essentials of behaviour management and how pupils learn. Other key elements, including adaptive teaching and pedagogy, are skilfully interwoven. High-quality specialist sessions build on trainees' knowledge. Experienced phase and subject leaders guide trainees to apply what they learn to their own practice. Primary trainees are well prepared to teach early reading, including using systematic synthetic phonics. These trainees revisit each foundation subject throughout the course to deepen their understanding. Secondary trainees learn about practices that are unique to their subject, as well as enhancing their own subject knowledge. Trainees place considerable value on these specialist sessions.

Trainees benefit from experiencing at least two contrasting school placements. Communication between SCITT leaders and partnership schools is strong. Centre-based training and trainees' school experiences are closely aligned. School-based mentors are skilled professionals. They are familiar with the course content and know how to help trainees develop their knowledge and practice. However, a few mentors do not focus sharply enough on how well trainees help pupils secure a lesson's intended learning outcomes. Agreed 'progress steps' do not always focus on the most appropriate things that trainees need to work on.

Assessment of trainees is thorough. A wealth of evidence helps leaders identify any trainees who need extra support so that trainees are ready to gain qualified teacher status. However, these comprehensive checks sometimes divert trainees' time and attention away from developing their classroom practice as their teaching commitment grows.

Current and past trainees are great ambassadors for the course. They typically say their experience is 'brilliant preparation for the future'. Despite this, SCITT leaders rarely seek the collective views of past trainees to highlight these positives and identify what could improve. Trainees know exactly what to expect when they take up their first teaching posts and how they can continue to develop. Many trainees find employment within partnership schools or locally. This reflects the confidence school leaders have in the quality of the training programme.

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

- Mentoring is not as consistently precise as it needs to be. A few mentors focus overtly on trainees' classroom management when discussing lesson visits with trainees. They do not pay close enough attention to how trainees' practice helps pupils acquire new knowledge and skills. Leaders need to ensure that all mentors implement the agreed approaches to supporting trainees so that trainees have the chance to reflect on how their classroom practice secures pupils' learning.
- As the courses progress, some trainees find the assessment checks required to monitor their progress a little overwhelming. At key points, there is tension between the requirements of these checks and the focus trainees need to give to their increased teaching commitments. Leaders should ensure that the demands of the assessment processes allow trainees to focus their attention on the most pertinent aspects that help them develop as a teacher.
- Early careers teachers who completed their training with the SCITT do not routinely share their experiences of the programme with leaders. Leaders do not always use the views of past trainees to inform their strategic plans for improvement. Leaders need to provide past trainees with opportunities to collectively share what went well with their training and how the programme could be improved.

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	70305
Inspection number	10291984

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	15 May and 27 November 2017

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, Lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Stevens	His Majesty's Inspector
Martin Finch	Ofsted Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Bluecoat Primary Academy	145145	Primary
Whitemoor Academy (Primary and Nursery)	138663	Primary
Bluecoat Aspley Academy	137798	Secondary
Bluecoat Beechdale Academy	140369	Secondary
Bluecoat Wollaton Academy	145146	Secondary
Leesbrook Academy	143934	Secondary
St John Houghton Catholic Academy	137908	Secondary
The Long Eaton School	136716	Secondary

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