

Kingston University

Faculty of Health, Science, Social Care and Education, School of Education, Midwifery and Social Work, Kingston Hill Campus, Kingston Upon Thames, KT2 7LB

Inspection dates

5 to 8 February 2024

Inspection judgements

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

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

Trainees value the camaraderie that they have with their peers, especially when trainees come together in mixed-phase seminar groups. These seminars enable trainees to gain an understanding of the progress that pupils make in their learning from early years through to the end of their secondary education.

All trainees, including those in the secondary phase, gain a strong grounding in how to teach early reading. Trainees are particularly positive about the way the ITE curriculum prepares them to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in diverse settings. Alongside this, trainees develop effective behaviour management strategies. Trainees like how the course covers the realities of teaching, describing the university as 'big' on professional behaviours and inclusive practice.

Trainees feel well supported with their well-being, with staff on hand to help trainees to meet deadlines and be successful in their learning, for example when planning sequences of lessons. The university combines high-quality pastoral support with giving trainees a realistic sense of the workload involved in a teaching career.

Typically, trainees find the weekly school-based mentoring meetings and research tasks helpful. On occasion, where mentoring is less effective, targets do not help trainees to apply their learning in the classroom as well as they might. While, overall, trainees are

prepared well to teach their chosen subject or age range, a few aspects of the primary and secondary-phase curriculums are not as effective in developing their subject knowledge.

Information about this ITE provider

- The provider currently has 13 trainees in the early years phase, 170 primary-phase trainees and 52 secondary-phase trainees.
- The early years phase has trainees on a one-year employment-based Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) route.
- In the primary phase, there are trainees on the three-year Batchelor of Arts degree course and the PGCE route.
- The secondary phase has trainees on the PGCE course.
- The provider has 26 partner settings in the early years phase, 168 partner schools in the primary phase and 80 partner schools in the secondary phase.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by nine of His Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors met with partnership leaders (including the professional lead for teacher education partnerships), the head of school, the head of department and the heads of the early years, primary and secondary phases. Inspectors also met with the steering groups in all phases.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders from partnership schools. They held meetings with university subject tutors, school-based mentors, trainees and early career teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to eight early years trainees, 56 primary-phase trainees and 15 secondary-phase trainees. They also spoke to 14 early career teachers. Some of these discussions took place remotely.
- In the early years phase, focused reviews were conducted in communication and language including early reading, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development.
- In the primary phase, inspectors carried out focused reviews in early reading, mathematics, physical education, geography and history.
- In the secondary phase, focused reviews took place in English, physical education and biology.
- Inspectors visited four early years placement settings, 10 schools in the primary phase and five schools in the secondary phase.
- For all phases, inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for trainees.

Early years phase report

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

The early years ITE curriculum is ambitious. Course content is well sequenced, building successfully on the experiences and knowledge that trainees bring with them from their settings. Trainees learn about important theoretical principles of education, with course content chosen carefully to deepen their understanding of children's development across the early years curriculum. Trainees appreciate this. They are highly positive about the learning and support that they receive, especially in how to help children with SEND overcome barriers to learning. Trainees learn to adapt their teaching to ensure that all children experience success, while maintaining high expectations.

Recent, credible research on pedagogical approaches is interwoven throughout the taught course. This enables trainees to take the most up-to-date knowledge back into their practice in settings and the sector more widely. What trainees learn at the centre is mirrored in their placement-based training. Course leaders are experts in their field. They use their experience in national and international early years educational research to continually improve how the curriculum develops trainees' practice. Mentors in settings are positive about the impact that the course is having, describing how trainees help to instigate wider improvements in their settings. Mentors value the links that they forge with the university and the wider early years sector.

Communication and language, and the progression into early reading, are given high priority in the curriculum for all trainees. Centre-based training enables trainees to understand how to support children's language development. This knowledge is built on and extended by ensuring that trainees undertake contrasting placements, for example in key stage 1 classrooms. Trainees understand how children progress from building language and engaging with stories and rhyme, to learning phonics systematically and starting to read.

Course leaders organise training for mentors at the start of the year. This is largely procedural and covers course content and expectations of trainees. However, training does not adequately cover the university's expectations for how mentoring should contribute to trainees' progression through the course, including the purpose of observations, coaching and target setting. As a result, the quality of mentoring within settings can be inconsistent, leading to some trainees being set targets that are generic or that do not link well enough with the ITE curriculum. Leaders are aware of this and are taking actions to ensure that any gaps in support for trainees are plugged effectively. Course leaders use assessment information astutely to put in place additional support when trainees need it. The rigour in assessment and the sensitivity and timeliness with which leaders respond to assessment mean that all trainees complete the course.

Typically, trainees are well prepared for a successful career as an early years teacher. From the recruitment stage all the way through to course completion, trainees are supported to be proactive and reflective in their approach.

What does the ITE provider need to do to improve the early years phase?

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- At times, trainees' development is not underpinned by consistently high-quality support from the setting-based mentoring programme. When the quality of the mentoring programme is less strong, trainees are given targets that are too broad or that do not connect sufficiently well with the taught curriculum. This makes it more difficult for them to apply educational theories learned at the university to their settings. Leaders should ensure that the mentoring programme fully reflects the university's aim for trainees to receive high-quality guidance and support in all aspects of the ITE programme.

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

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

Primary phase report

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

Course leaders have made sure that the ITE curriculum is ambitious in scope and content choice, regardless of the training route trainees are on. Experienced and knowledgeable staff build and embed trainees' understanding of how to teach each national curriculum subject, with course content based on pertinent, educational research. This approach is highly effective in most subjects. In a small number of foundation subjects, some of the course content is not as rich and broad in scope or revisited sufficiently. This reduces trainees' overall readiness for planning and delivering lessons in these subjects.

Course leaders have prioritised the teaching of early reading. There are several sessions delivered and revisited over the duration of the course. These build effectively on trainees' prior knowledge. Initially, trainees learn the key phases and terminology of systematic synthetic phonics teaching. Over time, trainees gain a strong understanding of phonics, including the different programmes that they are likely to encounter in schools. Carefully planned course and in-school tasks contribute to ensuring that all trainees have an excellent understanding of how pupils learn to read.

The core content framework is fully integrated within the curriculum. Leaders and staff have carefully considered every statement and these are woven meaningfully into each element of course content. They have focused on making sure that all components of the training programme, whether at the centre or in placement schools, align closely with their ambitious curriculum goals. For example, in-school tasks and weekly discussions with mentors link purposefully to what trainees have been taught at the university.

Trainees are supported to adapt their teaching for pupils with SEND incredibly well. For example, they are expected to work closely with expert colleagues, such as the school's special educational needs coordinator, to understand more about how pupils' needs should be identified and supported. The way in which the curriculum promotes trainees' readiness to create inclusive classrooms is a real strength of the programme.

Professional behaviours are taught discretely on every route but are also interwoven into most sessions. Lecturers include contextual advice and guidance on managing pupils' behaviour. Trainees value the emphasis the course gives to them being able to fulfil their responsibilities as a teacher.

The assessment of trainees is a thorough and on-going process. Subject tutors check trainees' understanding each week during taught sessions. Typically, the mentoring programme sets trainees clear, weekly targets. That said, not all mentoring provides constructive feedback or precise enough next steps for how trainees can develop their practice. Leaders are aware that they need to make their expectations for the mentoring programme clearer for everyone.

Trainees feel extremely well supported on the programme. Leaders regularly seek the views of trainees and other stakeholders to help them refine aspects of the ITE curriculum.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, the way in which the curriculum develops trainees' readiness to teach the subject is less strong than in other national curriculum subjects. This can affect trainees' understanding of how to plan and deliver a series of lessons in this subject. Leaders should strengthen the ITE curriculum so that the scope and depth of what is taught is equally as rich across all foundation subjects.
- Aspects of the mentoring programme do not align with the provider's expectations for target setting and observation feedback. This means that there is some variation in the quality of support that trainees receive on their placements. Leaders should take further steps to ensure that school-based mentoring plays a consistently helpful role in preparing trainees to teach.

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 ensure that secondary trainees experience an ambitious curriculum which goes well beyond the minimum entitlement of the core content framework. They have carefully thought about what trainees should be taught and when. This thinking includes the content trainees learn about behaviour management and supporting pupils with SEND. The curriculum that trainees are taught in their professional studies matches well to what they learn and apply in their subject sessions. Trainees are well prepared to use and hone their professional skills on each of their school placements.

One important strength in the curriculum is how well trainees are supported to critique and learn from research-informed practice. For example, the 'reflective teacher' modules, 'micro-teaching' sessions and weekly reflection tasks all combine to help trainees carefully think about and reflect on their professional practice. Trainees also benefit from revisiting important content as the academic year progresses. For example, they explore how best to deploy support staff in the classroom as part of their further learning about helping pupils with SEND to overcome barriers to accessing the curriculum.

The curriculum supports trainees effectively in developing their subject knowledge in readiness for teaching. However, there are inconsistencies in how well subject audits and course delivery help trainees to precisely identify and subsequently close gaps in the breadth and depth of their own subject knowledge.

Overall, leaders make sure that centre- and school-based training matches well. As a result, trainees revisit and apply key ideas about teaching their subject purposefully, and in turn develop an increasingly in-depth understanding of how to ensure pupils learn and remember subject content.

School-based mentoring ensures that expert knowledge is positively shared with trainees. For example, those involved in school-based mentoring have a secure understanding of how to use the 'development descriptors' to assess each trainees' progress and to help set targets for improvement. Leaders have mapped out a range of quality assurance steps, such as early progress checks, to review the impact of the curriculum and the quality of school-based mentoring. That said, there is some variability in the quality of school-based mentoring. At times, it does not integrate well with centre-based training and some of the targets being set for trainees are not specific enough to give trainees clarity on what to improve.

The quality of pastoral support offered to trainees is high. Leaders carefully consider the workloads of both trainees and staff involved in school-based mentoring when making decisions. Trainees are regularly signposted to further support for mental health and well-being via university support services.

Leaders work with trainees and partner schools to reflect on how to improve the ITE curriculum. Partner schools emphasise the strong communication with course leaders and

staff. They described them as 'approachable' and 'flexible'. School leaders value their work with the university and the opportunity to recruit high-quality teachers that it affords.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the school-based mentoring programme does not fully support the delivery of the ITE curriculum as well as it should. In some instances, mentoring does not integrate well with centre-based training and the targets that are set for trainees lack precision. Leaders should refine their training and support for school-based mentoring to ensure that its advice and target setting better supports the delivery of the intended curriculum.
- Leaders' approach in supporting trainees to fully develop their subject knowledge sometimes lacks rigour. When this happens, trainees lack a clear understanding of any potential gaps in the depth and breadth of their subject knowledge and, importantly, how to close them. Leaders should strengthen and refine how they help trainees further develop and deepen their subject knowledge in readiness for teaching.

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	70036
Inspection number	10307561

This inspection was carried out in accordance with the [initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook](#), which 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	Early years Primary Secondary
Date of previous inspection	27 April and 28 September 2015

Inspection team

Lisa Strong, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Samantha Ingram, Phase lead inspector (early years)	His Majesty's Inspector
Aliki Constantopoulou, Phase lead inspector (primary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Sam Hainey, Phase lead inspector (secondary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Russell Bennet	His Majesty's Inspector
Amanda Carter-Fraser	His Majesty's Inspector
Annabel Davies	His Majesty's Inspector
Sacha Husnu-Beresford	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Wright	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement/employment settings, schools, and colleges

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

Name	URN	ITE phase(s)
Seahorse Nursery	2673767	Early years
Little Forest Folk	2557645	Early years
St George's College Weybridge	125361	Early years
Reach Academy	138266	Early years
St Lawrence C of E Aided Junior School	125179	Primary
Wood Street Infant school	125004	Primary
Green Lane Primary	146127	Primary
King's Oak Primary School	102582	Primary
St Andrew's and St Mark's C of E Junior school	102588	Primary
Horsell C of E Junior School	125201	Primary
Burlington Junior School	102564	Primary
Thames Ditton Infant School	124968	Primary
Albemarle Primary School	101032	Primary
Coombe Hill Infant School	102567	Primary
Tolworth Girls' School and Sixth Form	137060	Secondary
Rutlish School	102679	Secondary
Three Rivers Academy	144503	Secondary
Blenheim High School	137906	Secondary
Kingston Academy	141862	Secondary

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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