

University of Birmingham

School of Education, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT

Inspection dates

5 to 8 February 2024

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?

Leaders put West Midlands pupils at the heart of what they do. They ensure that trainees are effectively prepared to meet the needs and challenges of the region and beyond. Trainees are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. Many trainees commented on how their personal tutors get to know them as individuals and genuinely care about their well-being.

Trainees receive a solid grounding in the key aspects of teaching. This includes being aware of safeguarding, behaviour management strategies and managing workload. Primary trainees benefit from an exceptionally high-quality curriculum. They are provided with a strong foundation for teaching systematic synthetic phonics. Secondary trainees are well prepared to teach their subject and have a good understanding of subject research and debates.

Adaptive teaching and helping pupils of all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to be successful is a strong thread throughout the courses. This prepares all trainees extremely well for their school-based placements.

Leaders have developed strong links with partner schools. Within primary, this ensures that trainees benefit from highly consistent, effective mentoring. All trainees learn how to apply their knowledge and understanding in the classroom.

The vast number of wider opportunities for trainees, which include sessions on 'classics for all', character development and visits linked to specific subject areas, help to further enhance trainees' development into well-rounded teachers.

Information about this ITE provider

- In the 2023/24 academic year, the partnership had 287 trainees over two phases: primary and secondary.
- In the primary age-phase, the partnership trained a total of 135 trainees. There were 135 full-time trainees studying towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDipEd). The number of trainees on different primary routes were as follows: 107 trainees on the primary PGDipEd, seven trainees on the primary mathematics PGDipEd, 17 School Direct PGDipEd and four primary SEND PGDipEd.
- In the secondary age-phase, there were 152 trainees. This included 146 following the PGDipEd route and six on the School Direct PGDipEd route. The PGDipEd subjects offered in secondary age-phase were as follows: English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education, biology, chemistry, physics and engineers teach physics.
- The provider works with a wide range of schools, colleges and other settings. Most of these partners are inspected by Ofsted. In 2023/24, those settings had been graded by Ofsted as outstanding, good or requires improvement.
- Overall, the partnership works with 29 School Direct partners across the primary and secondary age-phases. These partners span five local authorities.
- In the primary phase, the partnership works with 63 schools, covering eight local authorities.
- In the secondary phase, the partnership works with 107 schools, spanning 14 local authorities.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by seven of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two Ofsted Inspectors (OIs).
- During the inspection, inspectors met with senior university leaders, programme directors, subject tutors and members of the teacher education advisory group. Inspectors spoke with professional mentors, subject mentors, headteachers and senior leaders in partner schools.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of information, including documentation relating to the ITE curriculum in both phases; documentation in relation to safeguarding arrangements; audits of the provider's compliance with the Department for Education's (DfE) ITT criteria and supporting information; training materials from across all phases; assessment materials; and course handbooks.

- In the primary phase, inspectors spoke with 46 trainees, six early career teachers (ECTs) and 20 mentors. Inspectors made three on-site visits to schools and spoke face to face or remotely with trainees from a total of 35 schools.
- In the secondary phase, inspectors spoke with 59 trainees, 19 ECTs and 30 mentors. They spoke face to face or remotely with trainees from a total of 41 schools.
- In the primary phase, inspectors completed focused reviews in early reading, English, mathematics, science, geography, art and physical education (PE).
- In the secondary phase, inspectors carried out focused reviews in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physics and PE.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted surveys for staff and trainees that were completed during the inspection.

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. Leaders have carefully considered the content and order of the ITE curriculum so that every component has a meaningful place. High-quality, centre-based training is structured around professional enquiries and subject-specific training. These two elements dovetail together so trainees explore what they have learned in professional enquiries through subject-specific lenses. Leaders have made judicious choices about the research that underpins the curriculum. It is seamlessly woven into lectures, discussions with mentors, training materials and assignments.

The curriculum is underpinned by the DfE's core content framework (CCF) but extends far beyond this. Inclusion is the hallmark of the curriculum; SEND and English as an additional language are explored in detail in adaptive teaching sessions, but they are also interspersed across all other aspects of the curriculum. Trainees get off to a great start with early reading training. Centre-based lectures give them a solid basis, which they subsequently build on during school placements when they encounter different phonics schemes.

Trainees are given a plethora of opportunities to put their centre-based training into practice in school through purposeful, focused tasks. The provider has deliberately placed behaviour management training at the start of the autumn term because they know that some trainees are anxious about this. Training is structured around positive relationships, rules and routines. It is then skilfully funnelled into subject-specific aspects of behaviour management, such as how trainees can use their voice and hand gestures in physical education lessons. Trainees are extremely well prepared for their first school placement.

High-quality mentoring supports trainees exceptionally well. Mentors are kept informed about centre-based training through weekly emails. This makes school placements meaningful and strengthens work between the provider and partnership schools. Mentors also have access to a range of supplementary resources through the mentor website. Trainees are overwhelmingly positive about the time that their mentors invest in them. They value the professional dialogue, including the setting of specific targets. The targets are quality assured rigorously by university leaders to ensure the work of mentors is highly effective.

Trainees are skilfully assessed as they progress through the curriculum. This is underpinned by teaching progress report forms across the year, which identify strengths and areas for further improvement. Personal tutors are quick to intervene if they have concerns about a trainee's progress. Partnership schools and trainees agree that there is 'nowhere to hide' because of the provider's robust quality assurance processes. By the end of the year, trainees are exceptionally well prepared to embark upon their teaching career.

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 created a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have thought carefully about the content trainees will encounter and have ordered this sensibly. The knowledge that trainees learn is closely linked to, and goes far beyond, the CCF. Leaders ensure that trainees develop a deep understanding of the local context, and trainees also benefit from a wide range of additional programmes and qualifications.

The professional enquiry programme draws on pertinent and credible research. For example, trainees learn about up-to-date research into the science of learning and how to adapt teaching for pupils with additional needs. Subject tutors skilfully weave this into a subject-specific context. Over the course of the programme, this strong focus on research enables trainees to understand and reflect on the debates that surround their subject specialism. Trainees' pedagogical and subject expertise develop well over time.

Relationships with partner schools are strong, and leaders have built a profound understanding of the contextual issues facing each school. Leaders use this knowledge to good effect and ensure that trainees are well prepared for their school placements. Schools across the partnership value the strength of these relationships.

Leaders have developed an effective professional development programme for mentors to enable them to integrate the secondary ITE curriculum successfully into trainees' school placements. Where this works well, mentors and trainees regularly discuss the 'themes' of the curriculum, and trainees reflect well on their learning. This builds trainees' confidence and expertise. However, in some instances, the feedback that trainees receive from mentors is not precise enough, nor is it aligned with the secondary ITE curriculum. Where this happens, trainees' experiences do not meet leaders' high expectations.

Leaders have systems in place to check that the curriculum is being delivered as intended and to assure themselves of the quality of mentoring arrangements across the partnership. However, too often, leaders do not make effective use of these systems to identify when mentors are not meeting leaders' high expectations.

Leaders use a broad range of appropriate assessment strategies to monitor trainees' progress through the curriculum. Leaders make effective use of 'weekly submissions' to quickly identify any trainees who are not on track. When needed, university staff act swiftly, taking account of trainees' welfare, to provide effective support for those who need it. This considered approach helps to make sure that the vast majority of trainees complete the course and successfully transition into their first year of teaching.

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

[Information for the provider and appropriate authority]

- Leaders have not ensured that the targets mentors and trainees produce are of consistently high quality. Occasionally, the targets set lack precision and do not draw on the programme content. This does not help trainees to master the specific expertise they need to develop. Leaders should ensure that all mentors have a clear understanding of the centre-based learning, know what effective targets are and set these consistently so that all trainees benefit from precise guidance to enable them to improve.
- The quality assurance systems that leaders have in place are not sufficiently robust. As a result, leaders do not have a precise enough understanding of the quality of mentoring and the targets that are set for trainees. Leaders should review their quality assurance processes so that they gain a more accurate picture of mentoring to enable them to quickly identify where targets do not meet the provider's high expectations.

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	70001
Inspection number	10303733

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	Primary Secondary
Date of previous inspection	20 to 23 May 2013

Inspection team

Mark Howes, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Wayne Simner, Phase lead inspector (primary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Alexander Laney, Phase lead inspector (secondary)	His Majesty's Inspector
Bianka Zemke	His Majesty's Inspector
Corinne Biddell	His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Leighton	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Sims	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Henrick	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Clarkson	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Lutley Primary School	143783	Primary
St Benedict Biscop CofE Primary School	143829	Primary
Chadsgrove School	117062	Primary

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024