

Mersey Boroughs ITT Partnership

St Mary & St Pauls CE Primary School, Bryer Road, Prescot, Merseyside L35 5DN

Inspection dates

4 to 7 March 2024

Inspection judgements

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 extremely proud to be part of this close-knit partnership. Relationships between staff and trainees are exceptionally strong. Trainees know that school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) leaders care about them and want them to be well prepared for the daily demands of teaching. Leaders listen responsively to trainees' views. They provide sensitive pastoral support and timely academic challenge to trainees. Trainees' confidence in the provider is well placed.

Trainees are well prepared to teach the full primary national curriculum. Over time, trainees develop the knowledge necessary to teach early reading competently. This includes gaining a confident understanding of the centrality of systematic synthetic phonics in teaching pupils to read. Trainees gain equal assurance in how to support pupils to become fluent in mathematics.

Trainees are taught to be ambitious for all pupils. They learn how to adapt the delivery of subject curriculums for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Equally, trainees understand how important it is to make the curriculum accessible to pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Leaders work in genuine synergy with partner schools to ensure that trainees' subject expertise is developed in close unison with their understanding of classroom practice. This includes learning how to manage pupils' behaviour positively and how to keep pupils safe. Trainees develop their knowledge of wider professional responsibilities from the outset. They revisit them across different school-based experiences to cement their

understanding. The high-quality initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum means that trainees are well equipped to become successful early career teachers.

Information about this ITE provider

- The Mersey Boroughs Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) partnership has provided ITE since September 2014. The partnership expanded in 2023 to include Chester Diocesan Academies Trust as a lead partner.
- The SCITT is based at St Mary and St Paul's CofE Primary School. It provides primary age-phase training in the five to 11 age range. A small number of trainees follow an assessment-only route into teaching. This includes for secondary age-phase trainees.
- In the 2023/24 academic year, there were 32 trainees enrolled onto the partnership's ITE programmes.
- Those trainees who successfully complete their training are awarded qualified teacher status (QTS).
- The partnership works with Liverpool John Moores University and Anglia Ruskin University for those trainees who wish to follow the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) route.
- In 2023/2024 the partnership was working with 32 primary schools across 11 local authorities.
- The partnership schools that work with the SCITT have been judged as outstanding, good and requires improvement by Ofsted. Currently, there are no partner schools graded as inadequate.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by two of His Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of SCITT leaders, including the director of the SCITT and the accounting officer. The lead inspector met with members of the SCITT's executive committee, including the chair of the committee. Inspectors spoke with a range of staff and other partners within the SCITT.
- Inspectors sampled a wide range of documentation relating to the ITE training programme. This included curriculum documentation, trainees' assignments, records of target setting and information relating to the Department for Education's (DfE's) ITT criteria and supporting advice.
- Inspectors also reviewed a wide range of information relating to the leadership and management of the partnership. These documents included leaders' records of self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of Liverpool John Moores University and Anglia Ruskin University to discuss the PGCE element of the training programme.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for trainees and staff.
- Inspectors carried out focused reviews in the foundation subjects, focusing on art and design, and geography. Inspectors also carried out focused reviews in early reading and mathematics.
- The inspection was carried out through face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings and on-site visits to partner schools.
- During the inspection, inspectors visited three schools. They spoke with 20 trainees and 25 school-based trainers (SBTs), either face to face or remotely.
- Inspectors spoke with 11 early career teachers (ECTs), who had previously completed their initial teacher training with the provider. This included ECTs who had completed the assessment-only route into teaching.

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

There is a palpable sense of pride and personal investment in this SCITT programme from all involved. Leaders across the partnership are highly committed to this route into teaching. They work collaboratively to enhance trainees' experiences and learning of the ITE curriculum. Many trainees find employment within partnership schools. This is because school leaders see the quality of trainees first hand. The provider makes sure that trainees benefit from high-quality support as they embark on their early teaching careers. In this way, trainees enjoy a seamless transition from training to induction through to early career development.

Leaders across the partnership have crafted an ambitious training curriculum that is underpinned with relevant educational research. They have ensured that the curriculum exceeds the expectations of the DfE's core content framework. Trainees learn an appropriate breadth of subject knowledge, delivered by carefully selected subject specialists, each of them experts in their field. Trainees' knowledge is cemented through meticulously chosen, contrasting school-based experiences. This helps trainees to make strong connections between their centre- and school-based training. For example, in early reading, trainees learn the theory behind how pupils learn to read, before observing this in action in schools. Trainees become adept at applying their knowledge of early reading to the lessons that they teach themselves.

Trainees' progression through the ITE curriculum is carefully checked by SCITT leaders. These leaders have ensured that assessment aligns to the taught curriculum. Ongoing assessment is designed to help trainees to know exactly what they are working on and how this links to their overall development. Trainees welcome opportunities to reflect on and discuss their learning at more formal assessment points. SCITT leaders make appropriate use of the teachers' standards at the end of the programme to support recommendations for the award of QTS.

SCITT leaders, including quality assurance tutors, provide a considerable programme of training and support for SBTs. This is strengthened by high-quality communication and guidance materials, for example weekly newsletters and useful exemplars to support

meetings with trainees. Despite this, there remains some variance in the quality of targets that some SBTs set to support trainees' progression. On occasion, some of these targets lack subject specificity and they can be unhelpful to trainees. This is because, at times, some of the targets are too broad and generic and lack the precision necessary to support trainees to hone their craft. That said, many trainees demonstrate that they understand what they need to do to continue making strong progress over time.

SCITT leaders are outward facing. They collaborate well with other ITE providers to develop resources and to share expertise. For example, leaders have initiated the development of a shared approach to mentoring across a range of nearby ITE providers. This is to ensure readiness for forthcoming changes to the DfE's ITT requirements.

A relentless focus on improvement permeates the partnership. SCITT leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership well. The core team works together harmoniously to ensure quality and consistency across ITE programmes, and to keep the curriculum under constant review. SCITT leaders seek and respond swiftly to feedback from trainees, partner schools and external moderation. These review processes have informed several recent improvements to the training offer for current trainees. However, some of these improvements have benefited trainees based in some partner schools more than in others. Nevertheless, overall, improvements to the ITE curriculum mean that trainees are increasingly well prepared to teach within and beyond the Merseyside boroughs should they so wish.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- The targets set for some trainees are uneven in quality. On occasion, some SBTs do not set targets for trainees that have the granular focus that leaders expect. Instead, these SBTs set targets that lack subject specificity, or they are simply actions for trainees to complete. Leaders should ensure that these SBTs are supported to set targets that are precise, purposeful and reflect the trainees' journey towards the teachers' standards.
- The recent expansion of the partnership has led to a lack of parity in some aspects of current trainees' experiences. For example, trainees based in some partnership schools have not benefited fully from recent curriculum initiatives. Leaders should ensure that improvements are rolled out equitably across the partnership so that all trainees experience a curriculum of equal ambition and quality.

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

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70298
Inspection number	10250091

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	SCITT
Phases provided	Primary
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2016 and 28 November 2016

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, Lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jane Dennis	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Carr Mill Primary School	134661	Primary
St Mary and St Paul's CofE Primary School	104453	Primary
Stretton St Matthew's CofE Primary School	149613	Primary

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