

# Oxford Brookes University

Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill Campus, Oxford OX2 9AT

## Inspection dates

26 to 29 February 2024

## Inspection judgements

	Primary and secondary age-phase	Further education age-phase
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Requires improvement	Inadequate
The quality of education and training	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Good	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good	Good

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

Variability in the quality of training is a common feature across all phases, albeit for different reasons. In the onsite programmes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS), the curriculum is still relatively new and so some aspects are not fully embedded. The subject-specific content of the curriculum delivered by the teaching alliances is not always precise enough. There is a lack of joined-up thinking between the university and further education colleges about what post-16 trainees need to learn, which is detrimental to their development. Across the different routes, trainees' overall learning experience at the moment is too dependent on how good mentoring is.

On the other hand, there is a universal strength in the provider's care and support for trainees. They feel a strong sense of family or community. Trainees develop strategies to manage their workload and, rightly, appreciate what is done to help alleviate any pressures. They learn to be reflective about their practice.

There are also some notable strengths across the QTS curriculums, such as the grounding primary trainees get in teaching pupils to read. The courses champion the provider's commitment to equity and inclusion, equipping trainees with the knowledge and skills to support pupils with additional needs. The concerted focus on understanding how to nurture a classroom ethos conducive to learning has been successful.

## Information about this ITE provider

- Oxford Brookes offers a range of routes to QTS and a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) in the further education and skills (FES) sector. At the time of the inspection, there were 173 undergraduate and 74 postgraduate primary, 25 secondary and 15 FES phase trainees. There is also a small number of assessment-only candidates each year in each of the primary and secondary phases.
- Both undergraduate and postgraduate options are available to trainees wishing to teach either three to seven, or five to 11 years in primary schools. Around two-thirds of primary postgraduate trainees follow the core university pathway and the rest either School Direct or, for a very small number, School Direct-salaried. All secondary trainees follow an 11 to 18 years School Direct programme. In both phases, there is the option to study for a PGCE. The FES course is a full-time, pre-service route.
- The university works with around 125 primary schools in Oxfordshire and neighbouring local authorities. Most were judged good or outstanding when they were last inspected by Ofsted.
- In spring 2023, the school of education was integrated into the newly established school of education, humanities and languages. The head of school joined Oxford Brookes in April 2023 and the programme lead for the primary on-campus courses took up post in July 2023, having been at the university since January 2022. Many other programme leads and subject coordinators are relatively recent appointments. The decision has been taken not to offer the School Direct routes going forward, so there will be no secondary initial teacher education (ITE) at this provider after this academic year.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by five of His Majesty's inspectors and five Ofsted inspectors.
- Inspectors met with a range of university leaders, including the pro-vice chancellor; the head of school; primary and further education and skills programme leads; subject coordinators; the partnerships and placements manager; members of the partnership advisory group; the director from one of the teaching alliances; and subject leads from the partnership.
- The inspection team conducted focused reviews in early reading, mathematics, English, geography and computing in the primary phase; English, modern foreign languages and physical education in the secondary phase; and sports science, mathematics and law in FES. As part of these reviews, inspectors visited 10 schools and two colleges. They met with 36 trainees and 18 early career teachers (ECTs) in schools and five trainees in colleges, as well as mentors and senior staff with oversight of ITE.
- Inspectors also met in person or online with a further 21 trainees and four ECTs from schools, four FES trainees and two FES alumni, as well as other senior staff from partner institutions, mentors and visiting tutors. Over the course of the inspection, they reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the university and information

on its website, including recruitment and selection and safeguarding arrangements; quality assurance systems; the university's self-evaluation; and improvement planning. The team also scrutinised trainees' portfolios and considered the responses to staff and trainee surveys.

# Primary and secondary combined phase report

## **What works well in the primary and secondary combined phase and what needs to be done better?**

The provider's vision of 'excellence for all' is at the heart of the curriculum, but is not fully realised. Three distinct phases of the training programme mirror and help trainees to understand through their own experience the importance of carefully building pupils' learning over time. The curriculum has been frontloaded to teach trainees effective behaviour management strategies before they go into the classroom. Trainees have a thorough understanding of their professional responsibilities to protect children from potential risk of harm.

Over time, trainees develop a secure understanding of how to use assessment at the point of teaching so as to respond there and then to what pupils know and understand. Learning about adaptive teaching is woven through the programme, making good use of relevant research and trainees' learning from an inclusion placement. The core content framework, that underpins the curriculum, is complied with fully. Beyond these firm foundations, recent refinements to the curriculum, particularly in the foundation subjects, are not embedded fully yet. This means that trainees, particularly in the primary phase, are not as well prepared to teach these subjects as they should be.

Responsibility for determining the subject-specific content of the curriculum for School Direct trainees lacks clarity, particularly in the secondary phase. Many elements of the curriculum here are co-delivered by school-based mentors, including some aspects of specialist subject knowledge. Where mentoring is strong, trainees benefit from expert input and develop crucial knowledge and strategies for teaching specialist elements of the curriculum. There are, though, inconsistencies, including the degree to which trainees learn how relevant research in their subject informs effective teaching.

Overall, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring, which leaders are aware of and tackling. Previously, some mentors have not attended training sessions for this provider. This means some mentors are not as familiar with the ITE curriculum as they should be. Some fundamental learning has been left to chance and targets have not been specific enough to meet trainees' individual needs. Attendance at mentor training is now required and carefully monitored.

Great strides have been made in the assessment of trainees over the last 18 months. The trainee progress profile (TPP) is linked closely to the ITE curriculum. Mentors, supported by visiting tutors, assess trainees' progress through the school-based curriculum and set them targets to improve. Course leaders use TPPs to inform their weekly 'progress on placements' meetings and, as a result, are able to be proactive and prompt in identifying any trainees who need extra support or challenge. At the moment, there is still some variability in the quality of target setting.

Trainees report high levels of satisfaction with the programme and correctly identify that crucial changes have been made recently. Leaders use trainee feedback to make swift and effective improvements to the programme where appropriate. The programme has been significantly strengthened. The provider has a clear view of the programme's strengths and areas where further development is required.

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

### **(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)**

- Some of the recent developments brought about by new leaders, including to the curriculum, are not yet fully embedded. Coherence between the centre-based and school-based training is not consistent across all routes or subjects. In some subjects, the distinction between subject pedagogical knowledge and subject content knowledge is not clear. The provider must ensure that improvements to the curriculum are implemented and embedded across all subjects consistently.
- Mentoring has not been strong enough in the recent past. Some mentors have not engaged with vital training on the latest curriculum developments. This means that some trainees miss out on essential knowledge, such as the most up-to-date critical research that underpins the curriculum. The provider must ensure that all mentors access the same high-quality training and deliver the requirements of the course consistently across all subjects.

## **Does the ITE provider's primary and secondary combined phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?**

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

# Further education and skills phase report

## **What works well in the further education and skills phase and what needs to be done better?**

The FES ITE curriculum lacks the rigour needed to ensure that trainees understand, remember and can apply their learning effectively in their placements. While the taught element at the university is designed to build trainees' knowledge over time, it is not sufficiently far reaching. There is not a precise enough focus on preparedness to teach in the FES sector. Trainees do not have adequate exposure to, and hence understanding of, wider further education settings where teachers are needed or employability skills. There is too little focus on strategies for coaching and teaching to help their own students to progress and achieve. There is an over-reliance at times on using the experience of trainees in their placements as the basis for taught sessions rather than a planned programme.

The provider has not systematically ensured that placement training complements centre-based training. These two elements of trainees' experience are too disparate. There is no shared understanding of the curriculum. As a result, support, feedback and guidance in settings are variable in relevance and this has an adverse impact on trainees' progress. For example, they learn about educational theories, but they do not have consistently well-planned opportunities to develop this further in their placements to embed that knowledge. With some exceptions, they are not knowledgeable about meeting students' additional needs or confident in managing classroom behaviour or applying their learning about safeguarding. Most placement training is reactive and dependent on the expertise of the mentor and the teaching opportunities available for the trainees.

The curriculum is not planned well enough to ensure that trainees develop their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Trainees do not consistently benefit from support from suitably qualified and experienced mentors who are identified, trained and allocated promptly. A small minority of trainees do not have teaching opportunities in their chosen subject. Placement arrangements are not always timely. Too few trainees benefit from developing their practice and knowledge during their placements and often do not consolidate their learning until the first year in a teaching role.

The university uses a range of effective measures to identify the strengths and areas for development of the centre-based training and trainees' experiences. The provider recognises the lack of oversight and quality assurance of placement training and mentoring and has suitable actions in place to improve the programme. However, these have not been sufficiently timely to have a positive impact on trainees' experience and development within the year of their study. While the university monitors trainees' development in the taught element of their training, it does not have sufficient oversight of their progress in placements.

Trainees have access to a wide range of useful academic and pastoral support to help them overcome barriers and focus on their learning. Where this has been accessed, it has had a positive impact on trainees' development. Feedback from trainees is used appropriately to

adapt the programme. For example, weekly group tutorial sessions and individual progress meetings have been implemented to give an opportunity to identify any support needs for trainees. The structure of the programme has been amended to provide more intensive and practical preparation for the start of placements to reduce trainees' anxiety about teaching.

## **What does the ITE provider need to do to improve the FES phase?**

### **(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)**

- The ITE curriculum is not planned collaboratively with partner colleges. Trainees do not consistently develop their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours or always have high-quality opportunities to apply their learning on their placements. The university must work more closely with partners to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the curriculum, how it is sequenced and how trainees' progress is tracked.
- Arrangements for organising trainees' placements are not robust enough. Too many trainees do not benefit from timely, adequate or suitable teaching placements. The provider must work in partnership with the colleges to ensure that all trainees are in the right environment to develop their subject knowledge, pedagogy and professional standards consistently.
- The university does not know enough about the progress that trainees make in placement training. This hampers the provider's ability to intervene effectively for the benefit of trainees. The provider must improve how it monitors the progress of trainees so that they have a clear picture of their development across all aspects of their training.
- The systems for overseeing mentoring support are not effective. The provider does not know enough about the quality and consistency of mentoring that trainees receive. Mentors are not all appropriately trained for their role. This means that trainees do not consistently benefit from high-quality development in their placements. The university must further improve training for, and quality assurance of, mentors to develop their expertise and effectiveness.
- Actions to bring about improvements in quality have not been quick enough. Plans are not having a positive impact on current trainees' experience and development. The provider needs to ensure that progress against priorities is monitored carefully and in a timely fashion, so as to ensure that improvements are on track, or take remedial action where needed.

## ITE provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	70008
<b>Inspection number</b>	10311032

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.

<b>Type of ITE provider</b>	Higher education institution
<b>Phases provided</b>	Primary and secondary combined Further education and skills
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 June and 16 October 2017

## Inspection team

Alison Bradley, Overall lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Culling, Phase lead inspector (primary/secondary combined)	His Majesty's Inspector
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Carolyn Brownsea	His Majesty's Inspector
Marian Feeley	His Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Gordon	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Shelton	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Stenning	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Porter	Ofsted Inspector



## Annex: Placement/employment settings, schools, and colleges

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>URN</b>	<b>ITE phases</b>
Kennett School	136647	Primary/secondary
Mill Lane Community Primary School	123036	Primary/secondary
New Marston Primary School	143951	Primary/secondary
St Andrew's CE Primary School (Chinnor)	123126	Primary/secondary
St Bartholomew's School	137465	Primary/secondary
St Frideswide Primary School	148247	Primary/secondary
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Oxford)	123216	Primary/secondary
St Mary and St John CE Primary School	123213	Primary/secondary
The Downs School	110102	Primary/secondary
The John Henry Newman Academy	138774	Primary/secondary
Abingdon and Witney College	130793	FES
Activate Learning	134153	FES

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