

University College London (UCL)

20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

Inspection dates

18 to 21 March 2024

Inspection judgements

	Early years ITT	Primary age- phase	Secondary age-phase	Further education age-phase
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
The quality of education and training	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	N/A	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

Collectively, trainees, both past and present, talk effusively about UCL's 'academic rigour', 'strong support and pastoral care' and 'staff that want us to succeed'. They are particularly appreciative of UCL's 'gradual approach' to developing their teaching expertise and how this is built into placement experiences. Trainees say that this helps to manage workload, and builds both their confidence and expertise on their journey towards whole-class teaching.

Trainees benefit from a highly ambitious course that fully develops their subject and phase expertise. This includes trainees developing a comprehensive understanding of teaching early reading. At the heart of UCL's approach is the development of trainees' ability to engage with and critically reflect on subject-specific and pedagogical research. This helps trainees to skilfully review and refine their teaching.

UCL's sharp focus on inclusion helps trainees to develop a deep understanding of adaptive teaching, for example in how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Trainees speak highly about the quality of their placements. They particularly emphasise how well setting-, school- or college-based mentoring guides and supports them. This includes helping them to build effective professional relationships and look after the safety and well-being of those in their different groups and classes.

UCL staff work incredibly well with partnership settings. Regular training for mentors, together with well-planned professional development activities such as joint observations, all combine to mean that high-quality support for trainees is at the heart of everyone's

work. Trainees are exceptionally well prepared to both enjoy and sustain a career in teaching.

Information about this ITE provider

- The Institute of Education (IOE), Faculty of Education and Society is the faculty within UCL whose offer includes initial teacher education.
- UCL currently has 17 trainees in the early years phase, 254 primary-phase trainees, 431 secondary-phase trainees and 34 trainees in the further education phase.
- Trainees in the early years phase are either studying a one-year employment-based or a one-year mainstream pathway Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) route.
- In the primary and secondary phases, most trainees follow the PGCE route through full-time study at the IOE, UCL. Some trainees on both phases are following the PGCE through the School Direct fee-funded route. This route is offered in partnership with IOE Lead Partners.
- There are three pathways on the PGCE primary route: primary, primary (specialist mathematics) and primary (early years foundation stage/key stage 1).
- In the secondary phase, UCL currently offers 18 secondary subjects.
- In the further education phase, all trainees follow the PGCE route. There are three pathways: a specialist route to teach adult literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL); a specialist route to teach mathematics and numeracy and a general route that deals with all other subjects.
- The provider currently has 33 partner settings/schools in the early years phase, 301 partner schools in the primary phase, 245 partner schools in the secondary phase and 17 partner colleges in the further education phase.
- Almost all settings, schools and colleges used for trainee placements are judged good or better by Ofsted for their overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by 14 of His Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors met with the dean, head of initial teacher education, both pro-directors, and the head of secondary, as well as programme and subject leaders/tutors. The lead inspector also met with members of committees who have responsibility for governance of ITE.
- Inspectors also met with partners who work with UCL, including members of the partnership advisory boards.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders from partnership schools. They held meetings with school-based mentors, trainees, former trainees and early career teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to 18 early years trainees, 47 primary-phase trainees, 35 secondary-phase trainees and 18 further education trainees. They also spoke to 38 early career teachers and/or former trainees. Some of these discussions took place remotely.

- In the early years phase, focused reviews were carried out 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, music, geography, art and design and computing.
- In the secondary phase, focused reviews took place in languages, history, biology, English, citizenship, mathematics, art and design and religious education.
- In the further education phase, focused reviews took place in English/ESOL/literacy, numeracy and mathematics and science.
- Inspectors visited four early years placement settings, 12 schools in the primary phase, 16 schools in the secondary phase and three colleges in the further education phase.
- For all phases, inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for both trainees and staff.

Early years phase report

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

The university's vision for excellence flows through the whole of the early years ITE programme. Curriculum thinking is ambitious, coherent and underpinned by pertinent research. Purposeful integration is very strong. This is because everyone, for example supervision tutors, mentors and trainees, is clear about what needs to happen and when. The curriculum successfully builds towards the end goal of producing high-quality, reflective practitioners that have a deep understanding of early years education. The depth of knowledge that trainees acquire over the course is exceptional.

The programme is led and delivered by early years and subject experts. The curriculum is shaped by staff's clear expectation that trainees develop their understanding of the early years framework alongside subject-specific content of the national curriculum. As a result, trainees develop a deep understanding of what lies beyond the early years, such as the expectations for learning in key stage 1. This is particularly true for communication and language, and children's progression into early reading. Rigorous centre-based training provides trainees with the foundational knowledge to support children's language development, from birth through to age five. Trainees are supported to apply this learning exceptionally well to all ages in the early years phase on their placements. This is then further built upon with a well-planned key stage 1 placement. This greatly enhances trainees' knowledge and experience, and in particular increases their expertise in the teaching of phonics.

The course equips trainees with a thorough grounding in relevant and current theoretical approaches. One of the many strengths of this course is how the theory that is taught is then transferred successfully into trainees' classroom practice, including with hands-on experience. Each trainee's placement experience is meticulously planned so that trainees spend time with every age group between birth to age five. This ensures that learning is meaningful. Trainees develop strong expertise, understanding fully their roles as educators.

Supervision tutors and mentors play a key part in ensuring that trainees continually learn and make consistently strong progress through curriculum. Weekly personal development plan meetings and feedback are just one example of UCL's comprehensive approach to supporting and evaluating trainees' development. These, along with regular formal review points, help trainees to continually improve, particularly in their pedagogical understanding and professional behaviours.

Leaders and trainees are highly reflective. Feedback from trainees and partnership settings is welcomed and acted upon. This open, reflective approach exemplifies leaders' effective work to sustain excellence in the curriculum. Leaders and supervision tutors regularly check the helpfulness of support and feedback that trainees get from their mentors. This results in consistent, high-quality mentoring. Trainees feel very well supported throughout the programme and appreciate the response of leaders, supervision tutors and mentors in meeting their individual needs.

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?

Leaders have designed an ambitious, carefully sequenced curriculum which prepares trainees to be highly effective primary teachers. The programme is embedded with a deep theoretical understanding of how to help all pupils to learn successfully, supported by pertinent and evolving research. Leaders skilfully support trainees to develop their ability to think critically about research and how they will apply it to their teaching. Trainees feel privileged to be working with subject leaders and tutors who are experts in their field. They especially value how the expertise of UCL staff enables them to understand and apply up-to-date educational theories on how to promote pupils' learning and wider development. The core content framework (CCF) is purposefully integrated into the curriculum, but what trainees are taught extends well beyond this. For example, the specialism module enables trainees to develop a depth and breadth of knowledge in different curriculum subjects.

Leaders ensure that trainees benefit from a curriculum with a sharp focus on the teaching of early reading and systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). Precisely taught sessions give trainees the essential knowledge and theoretical principles of SSP that they need to know. These are followed by targeted in-school practice that builds trainees' confidence in teaching early reading. Trainees also learn how to develop an inclusive classroom, for example in knowing how to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' different needs. Leaders have adapted the programme to provide increased emphasis on supporting pupils with SEND and those pupils who speak English as an additional language. This reflects leaders' work with partner schools to ensure that trainees learn about the changing context of London schools.

Highly effective partnership work ensures that trainees have strong mentoring support when they are on placements. Through clear guidance, mentors understand UCL's graduated approach to supporting trainees' development, including successfully applying theory into practice. Leaders have rigorous quality assurance processes. Collectively, university staff and school-based mentors are quick to identify and respond to each trainee's professional development needs, including any trainee requests for further support. This includes adjusting the programme to give trainees extra practice in things that they find difficult.

Leaders have well-designed systems for assessing trainees' progress, including considering any prior knowledge that trainees may have from their previous roles. Mentors provide incremental targets to help trainees to apply their centre-based learning and sharpen their practice. Trainees also learn how to reflect on their teaching, with mentoring expertly guiding them to think critically about the importance of having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Trainees are very well prepared for the demands of teaching. They learn a range of helpful strategies to support their well-being and workload, and how to translate these meaningfully into their roles. Leaders want trainees to succeed. This is demonstrated by the exceptional, positive relationships that exist between staff and trainees.

Partner schools speak highly of their work with UCL, actively taking part in research and training opportunities for their staff. Mentors especially value the professional development opportunities that the mentor role offers.

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?

UCL's secondary teacher training programme is highly ambitious. It is coherent, well sequenced and rigorous in content choice. The curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure there is depth in trainees' knowledge, preparing them extremely well to become confident, expert teachers of their phase and subject.

Leaders ensure that the professional practice and subject-specific curriculums are skilfully woven together. All aspects of the CCF are covered purposefully. Subject leaders are experts in their fields. They plan opportunities throughout the programme to deepen and enrich trainees' knowledge and experience. Trainees are taught to consider and evaluate the most effective ways of implementing their subject in different contexts and in contrasting placements. They are introduced to a broad range of up-to-date pedagogical principles and concepts. The programme enables trainees to reflect critically and to make informed choices about their classroom practice. Research sits at the heart of this. Trainees learn to draw astutely upon extensive high-quality professional and academic literature to inform these choices.

Trainees are well prepared to plan for the needs of pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language. They reflect on how they might adapt their practice to support all pupils to access and learn the curriculum successfully. They develop their understanding of behaviour management and specific elements such as routines, as well as ways in which to support pupils' mental health. Consideration of pupils' different needs is reflected in the university's carefully planned and rigorous professional studies programme, including in the 'Who do we teach and how do we teach them?' sessions. This is then explored further through the lens of individual subjects, enabling trainees to understand how to promote high-quality learning in their specialism.

Training at partner schools and at the centre is deliberately and purposefully integrated. There are high levels of engagement with mentors, who appreciate the regular training and clear communication from subject leaders and the institute partnership managers. Staff at UCL ensure that there is regular quality assurance of all aspects of the programme, including mentoring. They base improvement on regular and systematic evaluation of the curriculum, carefully considering the views of all stakeholders. They ensure that there is a tangible focus on trainee's well-being. Swift and highly effective support is put in place for any trainee who struggles with any aspect of the programme.

The assessment of trainees is well thought through. It focuses precisely on progress against the taught and practised elements of the curriculum. This coherence ensures that trainees understand their development as teachers, including their progress towards gaining qualified teacher status.

Leaders' vision for excellence is reflected in the exceptional quality of the secondary programme. Staff are relentless in ensuring that all aspects meet their high expectations

across all subjects. Leaders review the implementation of their development plans regularly. They ensure that UCL's focus on equality and reducing educational disadvantage underpins all aspects of the programme.

Does the ITE provider's secondary 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?

Leaders have developed a highly ambitious and rich curriculum that includes a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. They thoroughly consider the sequencing of the knowledge, skills and behaviours trainees need to support their development. Tutors rightly emphasise the value of critical reflection as a tool for professional development. Trainees are highly motivated to do well in their studies and develop their careers in the further education sector.

Leaders and tutors have excellent relationships with their partner colleges. They work very well together to skilfully align the training that trainees do at the university with the opportunities to apply their knowledge in their placement settings. Tutors and mentors work closely together to observe trainees and set improvement actions that ensure trainees fulfil their potential. The design of the course content ensures trainees gain experience of teaching different ages and levels. The shadow placement experience provides extremely useful exposure to the nuances and complexities of further education teaching.

Leaders maintain rigorous oversight of their programme. They make improvements through routine review and evaluation of their procedures. There are many effective quality assurance processes in place that helpfully inform the overall strategic direction of the provision at the university. As a result of leaders' astute and thorough oversight of the curriculum, trainees are being exceptionally well prepared for the rigours of the teaching profession.

Leaders have put in place highly effective mentoring arrangements. Mentors feel very well supported by university tutors. They value the range of opportunities to develop their skills, including, for instance, regular professional development sessions, webinars and individualised training in their workplaces. Mentors appreciate how UCL organises for mentors and tutors to carry out an initial joint observation of trainees' teaching, so that, right from the start, everyone is clear about priorities for support and development. Mentors value the skills they develop through working with trainees. They recognise the high calibre of trainees and the significant value they bring to their organisations.

Tutors' assessment of trainees' ongoing progress is highly effective. They use a range of ways such as individualised tutorials, written assignments and observations to check on how well trainees understand and apply their learning. Where any trainee falls behind, tutors put in place carefully considered interventions to help them get back on track.

Tutors benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities that help them to maintain their subject knowledge and teaching expertise. For example, they deliver conference presentations, undertake peer observations of each other and teach on non-PGCE programmes in their departments. Trainees recognise the breadth of skills and expert technical knowledge that their tutors have and speak very positively about them.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70119
Inspection number	10307566

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 Further education and skills
Date of previous inspection	18 to 21 November 2013

Inspection team

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Nick Turvey	His Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Walter	His Majesty's Inspector
Jude Wilson	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement/employment settings, schools, and colleges

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

Name	URN	ITE phases
Learning Stars Montessori	EY495111	Early Years
Little Angels Day Nursery: Highbury	131707	Early Years
UCL Nursery	EY43391	Early Years
UCL Nursery	EY345528	Early Years
Nightingale Primary School	102839	Primary
Thomas Buxton Primary School	100930	Primary
Brindishe Manor School	100693	Primary
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School	100451	Primary
Gladstone Park Primary School	140833	Primary
Torridon Primary School	100708	Primary
Childs Hill Primary School	147706	Primary
St John and St James CofE Primary School	132137	Primary
Christopher Hatton Primary School	130342	Primary
Tetherdown Primary School	102098	Primary
Trinity Primary Academy	138589	Primary
Wembley Primary School	130095	Primary
Acland Burghley School	100053	Secondary
Bow School	100965	Secondary
Brentwood School	115429	Secondary
Carshalton High School for Girls	136797	Secondary
Central Foundation Girls' School	100975	Secondary
Highgate Wood Secondary School	102154	Secondary
Mulberry Stepney Green Mathematics and Computing College	144700	Secondary
Plashet School	102782	Secondary
Regent High School	100051	Secondary
St Augustine's Federated Schools: CofE High School	101154	Secondary
St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls	137994	Secondary
St Mark's CofE Academy	134003	Secondary
St Paul's Way Trust School	143379	Secondary
Swanlea School	100973	Secondary
Westminster City School	138312	Secondary
Woodmansterne School	100590	Secondary
Capital City College Group	130421	Further Education
New City College	130418	Further Education
Southwark College	130552	Further Education

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