

University of Cambridge

Faculty of Education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 8PQ

Inspection dates

29 April to 2 May 2024

Inspection judgements

	Primary age-phase	Secondary age-phase
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	Outstanding
The quality of education and training	Outstanding	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding	Outstanding

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

Trainee teachers at the University of Cambridge benefit from exceptional teaching and guidance. This is underpinned by a belief in research and professional development that permeates the partnership. Trainees gain an excellent grasp of the fundamental theories, traditions and approaches that teachers must master. They embrace the notion that completing this course is the start of their journey as reflective and informed practitioners, not the end.

Trainees are pushed to achieve the highest standards, but, equally, they are supported exceptionally well by the faculty, colleges and wider university teams. This bespoke well-being package is easily accessible and many trainees continue to use this long after they have finished the course. Trainees leave with a desire to teach pupils from every walk of life. Many go on to work in deprived communities with the children and families who need great teachers most. Trainees leave the course with a first-class understanding of the subjects they teach and how to support pupils best.

The centre-based training is dovetailed precisely with their school experience, allowing trainees to hone their craft and reflect on their own learning and progress. They are incredibly well prepared to hit the ground running as they enter the teaching profession.

Information about this ITE provider

- At the time of this inspection, there were 79 trainees in the primary age-phase and 148 trainees in the secondary age-phase.
- The primary and secondary phases both deliver a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course. On completion, this certificate counts towards 50% of a master's degree qualification, which many trainees go on to complete.
- Primary trainees specialise in either early primary (ages 3 to 7) or general primary (ages 5 to 11).
- This year, there are trainees enrolled on the following secondary courses: art and design, biology, chemistry, Latin with classics, design and technology, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern languages, music, physics and religious studies.
- The provider works with approximately 200 schools who provide both trainee placements and opportunities for focused visits. These schools are mostly located in the East of England region. Most schools in the partnership were graded good or better at their most recent inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by six of His Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors. The inspection was carried out through in-person meetings, online meetings and on-site visits to partner schools and colleges.
- Inspectors met with the head and deputy head of faculty, programme managers and other senior leaders.
- The phase lead inspectors met with the partnership standing committees to discuss strategic leadership and governance arrangements.
- In all phases, inspectors spoke with headteachers and/or senior leaders in placement settings, curriculum leaders, professional tutors, mentors and teaching staff. They considered a range of documents, including trainee records and evidence of assessment, leaders' self-evaluation, and improvement planning.
- The inspection team considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for trainees. They also reviewed and took into account the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- In the primary phase, inspectors visited five placement schools and spoke with a total 28 trainees, either at their placement schools or via online meetings. They conducted focused reviews in early reading, mathematics, history and geography. Inspectors also held interviews with 15 former trainees.
- In the secondary phase, inspectors visited nine placement schools and spoke to 29 trainees. They conducted focused reviews in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Inspectors also held interviews with 12 former trainees.

Primary phase report

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

The curriculum, which seamlessly interweaves the core content framework, comprises six strands. Each strand helps trainees to acquire the attributes, subject knowledge and teaching skills that ensure a successful start to their career in education.

Developing professional values and dispositions anchors trainees' experience. Faculty- and school-based colleagues offer trainees highly personalised support. This tailored approach does not go unnoticed by trainees. They themselves go on to become teachers who value pupils' individual differences and help them to overcome any barriers to learning.

Trainees' subject knowledge is first-rate. Trainees acquire the knowledge that gives them the confidence and competence to teach a broad curriculum. Well-thought-through 'development days' allow trainees to visit a range of schools. These visits crystallise the training for subjects such as physical education and personal, social and health education. It helps trainees to understand the part teachers play in promoting pupils' physical and mental health.

Trainees benefit greatly from the partnership's steadfast focus on educational research. Trainees scrutinise each school of thought. They make informed decisions that elevate their teaching and encourage pupils' love of learning. The faculty's expertise inspires many trainees to complete a Master of Education qualification. Doing so allows trainees to contribute to the faculty's wide body of research with the aim to raise standards in state education.

Trainees develop an excellent understanding of early childhood development. In early reading, for example, trainees explore the impact on pupils of positive experiences around books and storytelling. Thought-provoking discussions about children's literature encourage trainees to be discerning when selecting books to read to pupils. Trainees learn how children learn to distinguish environmental sounds to support them later with phonics. How course leaders set out and teach trainees about systematic synthetic phonics across the year shows in trainees' strong understanding of how best to teach pupils to read.

Course leaders cleverly weave in opportunities that cultivate trainees' professional knowledge. This work is grounded in the reality of teaching by the partnership standing committee. Trainees learn how to safeguard pupils, manage workload and consider their own and others' well-being.

Trainees are unanimous in their praise for mentors, lead mentors and partnership tutors. Timely training, detailed documentation and crystal clear communication ensures trainees routinely receive high-quality mentoring that improves their pedagogical knowledge. Mentors appreciate, for example, how the 'knowledge quartets' guide them to evaluate trainees' teaching, outline their strengths and set suitable subject-specific targets. The

cyclic approach to assessment and feedback results in trainees achieving highly. Trainees receive concise career entry profiles. These allow them to hit the ground running when they start their career as teachers.

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?

The secondary training programme is ambitious, high-quality, cohesive and exceptionally well planned. It results in sought after early career teachers who are well equipped to face the challenges of the teaching profession. The expertly crafted curriculum is co-constructed with partnership schools. All the requirements of the core content framework are seamlessly threaded through.

The course is structured logically and thoughtfully. Through carefully tailored experiences, trainees secure the knowledge and skills that they need over time to become confident and highly competent teachers. Working closely with the university and school-based trainers, trainees build a clear understanding of their own teacher identity as subject specialists. Trainees are equipped with a rich understanding of subject-specific theory and wider research. They use this thoughtfully to inform and refine the decisions they make in the classroom. Trainees appreciate the university's impressive subject libraries and the expert support of the specialist library team.

Highly qualified and experienced subject lecturers work closely with trainees to break down important subject content into small steps to make learning manageable. They model excellent practice in the teaching of their specialist areas. As one trainee said, the university's subject-specific training 'is the best of the best'.

The longstanding and successful partnership ensures that the curriculum is routinely updated. Trainees thrive in this vibrant and close-knit learning community. The partnership's high aspirations are mirrored in its exceptionally well-developed approach to improving its own practice.

Trainees adapt their planning so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are supported to achieve well, for example by using visual prompts and carefully calibrated, clearly defined steps in learning. Trainees are quick to correct any misconceptions, while addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Trainees are rightly proud of their pupils' successes and eager for more.

Mentors receive expert guidance from professional tutors, subject lecturers and the wider university team. Trainees benefit from regular professional dialogue and feedback. Clear targets focus on systematic improvement. Assessment of trainees' academic, subject and professional practice is inextricably linked to the exceptional curriculum.

Trainees understand the importance of building effective relationships with pupils, while establishing clear boundaries and expectations. They are eloquent as they speak about their research and how pupils are motivated to learn.

Leaders' clear strategic vision reflects relentlessly high ambition for trainees and the ongoing development of the partnership's offer. The university is a significant catalyst for improvement. Schools value their place in the partnership, along with the significant impact this has on in-school staff development and pupils' learning.

The relationships across the partnership underpin the outstanding provision. Well-considered and consistent approaches ensure that trainees achieve the highest standards. The partnership is relentless in its pursuit of excellence and so the training continues to be of the highest quality.

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	70133
Inspection number	10327271

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 and secondary
Dates of previous inspection	14 May 2018 and 1 October 2018

Inspection team

Dan Lambert, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Short, Phase lead primary	His Majesty's Inspector
Christine Dick, Phase lead secondary	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Cooke	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Pearson	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Smith	His Majesty's Inspector
Lynne Williams	His Majesty's Inspector
Mireille Macraird	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools and colleges

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

Name	URN	ITE phases
Arbury Primary School	110664	Primary
Hardwick and Cambourne Primary School	110748	Primary
Millfield First and Nursery School	117309	Primary
Melbourn Primary School	110614	Primary
St Matthew's Primary School	110750	Primary
St Paul's CE Primary School	110839	Primary
Hardwick and Cambourne Community Primary School	110748	Primary
Chesterton Community College	136887	Secondary
Comberton Village College	136463	Secondary
Hertfordshire and Essex High School and Science College	140786	Secondary
Hinchingbrooke School	137475	Secondary
Leventhorpe School	137156	Secondary
Saffron Walden County High School	136776	Secondary
Swavesey Village College	136580	Secondary
Sawston Village College	136775	Secondary
The Bishop's Stortford High School	117577	Secondary

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