

Durham University

School of Education, Confluence Building, Durham University, Durham DH1 3LE

Inspection dates

20 to 23 May 2024

Inspection judgements

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

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

Trainees on both undergraduate and postgraduate routes benefit from high levels of support from the staff at Durham University and in their placement schools. Their well-being and workload are taken into account. Trainees access high-quality research that informs their practice. Despite this, there is some variation in the quality of education that trainees are currently receiving.

Aspects of the curriculum do not consistently provide trainees with the depth of knowledge that they need to teach their phases and subjects as well as they could. Some trainees are not sufficiently prepared to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND). The provider does not ensure that mentors know enough about the central curriculum to best reinforce this for trainees on placement.

In contrast, trainees are taught how to promote positive behaviour and how to ensure that pupils are safe. In the primary phase, trainees receive highly effective training on the importance of phonics in supporting early reading.

Leaders are committed to improving provision for all trainees. They are already in the process of making important changes in readiness for September 2024. Trainees from Durham University are valued and demonstrate high standards of professional behaviour.

Information about this ITE provider

- Durham University is a higher education institution that provides both undergraduate and postgraduate routes into teaching.
- In the primary phase, undergraduate trainees study the three-year BA Primary Education with qualified teacher status (QTS). At the start of 2023/24, there were 230 trainees taking this course. Postgraduate trainees study a one-year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) programme with QTS. In 2023/24, there were 45 trainees on this programme. A very small number of the primary trainees follow a School Direct route or an apprenticeship training route.
- In the secondary phase, all trainees study a one-year subject-specific PGCE with QTS. A very small number of secondary trainees follow a School Direct route. In 2023/24, there were 73 trainees on these courses. Trainees were enrolled on the following subject courses in the 11 to 16 age range: biology, chemistry, English, geography, history, Latin with classics, Mandarin, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and physics.
- The university works in collaboration with schools across 11 local authorities in North East England. At the time of this inspection, the provider had trainees in 32 secondary schools and 112 primary schools. All partnership schools are registered with the Department for Education and subject to inspection by Ofsted with judgements ranging from outstanding to requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out by five of His Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with several leaders, including the head of ITE, head of the school of education and an executive dean (social sciences and health). Additionally, leaders of individual ITE programmes, subject tutors and several other university-based staff were met during the inspection.
- The overall lead inspector met several members of the strategic management group.
- Inspectors met stakeholders from partnership schools, either in person or remotely. This included 20 headteachers and 23 school-based professional tutors and/or mentors. Inspectors spoke to 28 primary trainees and 18 secondary trainees. Additionally, 10 early career teachers (ECTs), who trained at this provider, were also met during the inspection.
- A wide range of documentation, including ITE course information and training materials, were reviewed as part of the inspection. Leader's records of quality assurance and improvement planning documentation were also reviewed.
- In the primary phase, focused reviews took place in early reading and English, mathematics, art and design, science and geography. In the secondary phase, the focused reviews took place in mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, physical education and science.

- The inspection included both in-person and online meetings. In total, 16 placement schools were visited as part of the inspection. Leaders, staff and trainees from several other schools were contacted remotely.
- Information from trainee and staff inspection surveys were also considered by inspectors.

Primary phase report

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

Trainees on the primary programmes benefit from working alongside experts in their field, with access to high-quality research. The university has ensured that the curriculum fully integrates the core content framework. However, the structure of the course and aspects of the curriculum do not help to consistently prepare trainees well for life in the classroom. Leaders are aware that some areas of the primary curriculum need reviewing and developing to ensure that they fully support all trainees to become effective teachers.

The curriculum for primary trainees currently centres around developing expertise in the teaching of reading, mathematics and science. For these areas, the curriculum is well structured. It prepares trainees effectively in order to support pupils' learning when they are on placements in schools. Trainees gain a good understanding of how to teach early reading, including phonics. This is a strength of the course. Trainees speak with confidence and knowledge about supporting pupils to become fluent readers.

The curriculum is less effective in preparing trainees for other aspects of their work. Trainees do not receive the opportunity to explore foundation subjects in enough depth. The training programme does not enable trainees to build sufficient knowledge over time. In addition, trainees do not gain sufficient insight into understanding different types of SEND or how the curriculum can be adapted to meet pupils' additional needs. Leaders recognise that trainees need further input in these areas.

Trainees receive centrally based training from university staff and expert colleagues from partner schools. Trainees have mixed reflections on the extent to which some central training prepares them to become teachers of the future. They do not consistently find aspects of this training useful in enhancing their school-based practice. Quality assurance systems do not sufficiently identify inconsistencies in the quality of training or the subsequent impact of these inconsistencies on trainees' experience.

Although the university has long-standing links with partner schools, there is variation in partners' knowledge of the key messages of the central curriculum. This limits how well the university-taught curriculum is built on in placement schools.

Many leaders from partner schools value trainees' understanding and demonstration of the professional behaviours required of teachers. Most trainees speak highly of the support they receive from their class-based mentors. However, there is some variation in how well university 'link tutors' oversee trainees' progression through the course and provide the additional support that some trainees need.

Trainees are assessed against 'milestones' as they move through the course. The university uses a virtual platform to oversee this work. However, there is sometimes a reliance on

checking the compliance of tasks, rather than considering how effectively trainees are implementing the learning from their taught sessions.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some important areas is not effectively sequenced or delivered. This means that trainees are not prepared to support pupils with SEND or to teach foundation subjects as well as they should. The provider should enhance the curriculum to ensure that trainees' learning is deepened in these areas.
- The centre-based curriculum is not shared effectively with schools. This limits how well schools build on the centre-based curriculum, leading to an uneven experience for some trainees. The provider should ensure that the centre-based programme is better understood by placement settings so that trainees experience consistently good training.
- Quality assurance is not used consistently well to check the quality of education and training and placement experience that trainees receive. This means that some variations in the support that some trainees receive are not identified and addressed. The provider should ensure that the checks they make lead to an effective quality of education and mentoring for trainees.

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

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

Do apprenticeships in the ITE provider's primary phase satisfy the principles and requirements of apprenticeship provision?

The provider meets the principles and requirements of apprenticeship provision in the primary phase. The provider assesses the training needs of apprentices at the start of the course. Trainees on the apprenticeship route receive appropriate training and experience in established partner schools. Checks are in place to ensure that those on the apprenticeship route are acquiring the knowledge, skills and experience that they need to be successful teachers. Trainees on the apprenticeship route get the time and support that they need to support their professional development.

Secondary phase report

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

Leaders' vision for secondary-phase ITE is to give secondary trainees a high-quality experience that prepares them for a career in the teaching profession. There is some variation in how well this is realised. The programme itself consists of a curriculum that is co-delivered by the university and expert colleagues from partner schools. It is informed by pertinent research. Aspects of the curriculum are well-taught, particularly via subject sessions at university. Indeed, trainees benefit greatly from the subject expertise and pastoral support that they receive from their subject tutors.

In other programme components, such as school-based professional opportunities and development sessions, trainees face inconsistency in the quality of taught sessions and in the rigour of content choice. In addition, while university lectures often present research to trainees, not enough is done to help trainees understand how to apply that research to their teaching. The sequencing of the centre-based programme, while designed to build trainees' knowledge and skills progressively, does not provide trainees with a sufficiently coherent body of knowledge and understanding that can be applied in schools.

The curriculum includes aspects of both subject-specific and phase-specific content. The core content framework is integrated into the curriculum. However, the curriculum does not provide trainees with sufficient breadth or depth of knowledge. For example, the curriculum does not give trainees the knowledge they need to meet the particular needs of pupils, including pupils with SEND. Trainees do not acquire an appropriate depth of pedagogical knowledge relevant to the teaching of their specific subjects.

The provider works in effective partnership with schools. Partner schools strengthen trainees' phase-specific knowledge through their own training programmes. Trainees experience mentoring that develops their teaching. However, mentoring sometimes focuses on developing generic as opposed to subject-specific pedagogy. Schools have little knowledge of the centre-based curriculum. This means that mentors, in particular, cannot build, as well as they might, on trainees' prior learning. In addition, assessment criteria do not enable mentors to assess trainees' curriculum knowledge and application with appropriate consistency and precision.

The provider has established an open and professional culture that promotes positive relationships with school leaders and trainees. Some trainees who complete the programme and gain QTS consider themselves to be well prepared for teaching in the secondary phase of education. However, others do not. Some aspects of programme evaluation and quality assurance are not rigorous enough. A lack of understanding about the frustrations that trainees have is preventing leaders from implementing the continuous improvement of provision that is required. The provider is aware that it should be giving trainees a higher quality of education and training, and it is fully committed to doing so.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- The content of the secondary-phase curriculum lacks depth in places and is not coherently sequenced. This means that trainees often experience a disconnected series of curriculum components that do not provide them with the knowledge that they need to teach their subjects well. In addition, trainees do not develop a sufficiently deep understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. The provider should improve the curriculum so that trainees are better equipped to teach their subjects and meet the needs of all pupils.
- The university does not provide mentors and partner schools with enough knowledge about the content of the university-delivered curriculum. Mentors are unable to build, as effectively as they might, on trainees' prior learning. It also leads to avoidable variation in the quality of mentoring. The university should ensure that it gives mentors the information they need, to allow them to better build on what trainees already know.
- The provider does not quality assure or evaluate the ITE curriculum and its implementation in the secondary phase with enough rigour. As a result, inconsistencies in provision are not routinely identified. This means that it does not know, with sufficient depth or precision, how effective its provision is. The provider should ensure that it develops a rigorous and systematic model of quality assurance and programme evaluation that leads to the continuous improvement of its ITE provision.

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	70021
Inspection number	10319221

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	HEI
Phases provided	Primary Secondary
Dates of previous inspection	22 to 25 April 2013

Inspection team

James Duncan, Overall lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Ian Rawstorne, Phase lead secondary	His Majesty's Inspector
Mary Cook	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Lane	Ofsted Inspector
Duncan Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Vellensworth	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Bede Burn Primary School	108693	Primary
Brougham Primary School	142965	Primary
Catcote Academy	139976	Primary
Crook Primary School	114056	Primary
Ferryhill Station Primary School	114078	Primary
Greenland Community Primary School	143585	Primary
Lanchester Endowed Parochial Primary School	131168	Primary
Whitehouse Primary School	111549	Primary
Belmont Community School	114308	Secondary
Croft Community School	114340	Secondary
Durham Johnston Comprehensive School	114312	Secondary
Gosforth Academy	136352	Secondary
Jarrow School	133725	Secondary
Southmoor Academy	138103	Secondary
St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College	138172	Secondary
Whitworth Park Academy	145564	Secondary

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