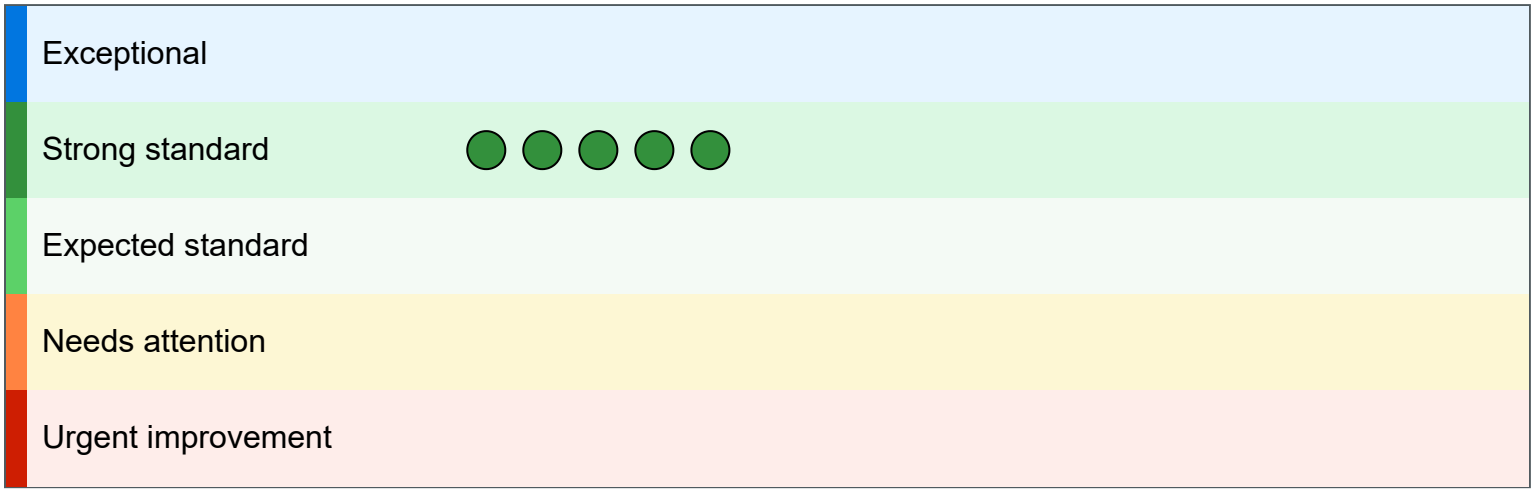
# University of Buckingham

**Address:** University of Buckingham, Hunter Street, Buckingham, Bucks, MK18 1EG

**Unique reference number (URN):** 70172

# Inspection report: 26 January 2026

## 1. Primary




## Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met

## Strong standard

### Achievement

**Strong standard**

Trainees build secure knowledge and skills. They are extremely well prepared to teach in the primary phase. The staff team works seamlessly to build a comprehensive knowledge of each trainee's context, needs and progress from their starting points. Leaders do all they can to identify any barriers to learning and help trainees overcome them in order to succeed. Any trainees at risk of falling behind are very well supported by leaders and staff. This flexible and compassionate approach enables very high levels of completion and preparedness for the day-to-day realities of being a teacher.

Trainees have many opportunities to practise new learning and make connections with what they already know. This helps to consolidate learning in areas such as behaviour management. Trainees fully understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Trainees reflect on this adeptly during weekly professional development meetings with their mentors.

Consequently, trainees have a realistic understanding of their strengths and areas for further development.

## Curriculum, teaching and training

**Strong standard**

The primary initial teacher education curriculum is designed meticulously. Mentors and tutors ensure that curriculum builds step-by-step on trainees' prior knowledge and skills. All trainees learn the latest educational research, pedagogical approaches, subject-specific content and the realities of teaching in the primary phase. For example, trainees learn about safeguarding at the start of the programme and deepen this knowledge as they progress through the curriculum. The curriculum fully meets the requirements of the initial teacher training and early career framework.

Intensive training and practice themes are woven coherently throughout the curriculum precisely. Deeply established, weekly cycles of learning follow a consistent pattern of talks, expert input, discussion and school-based practise. Centre-based learning and school-based experience combine to deepen trainees' learning very successfully. Trainees are supported well with ongoing reflections and targets in their professional development plan.

Trainees learn about the importance of foundational knowledge and skills in the primary phase. They understand very well the need to focus on pupils' oracy right from the start of their education. Trainees are well prepared to teach the curriculum content for early reading. They learn about and apply a range of systematic synthetic phonics programmes.

Leaders ensure that inclusion is integral to the ITE curriculum. They bring in a variety of experts to inform and deliver aspects of the curriculum relating to meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or other disabilities. Trainees learn about specific barriers to learning such as dyslexia, and how to scaffold learning for pupils with additional needs so that all pupils can access the same curriculum. Trainees learn how to adapt their teaching in subject- and phase-specific ways so that their pupils can access the same ambitious curriculum.

Trainees benefit from consistently high-quality mentoring. Mentors follow the agreed systems and are also empowered to tailor their support precisely for each trainee. Staff draw on their own experience to support mentors very well to understand their role and the ITE curriculum. Tutors, mentors and trainees alike are inspired by the interesting and relevant curriculum, which motivates them to read even further.

Assessment runs seamlessly through the ITE curriculum in the form of ongoing feedback from staff and mentors, and the highly effective termly assessments. Staff use the information from assessment very well to refine the curriculum in response to emerging needs. For example, they recently identified and responded to a need to re-enforce learning about professionalism. Trainees praise the usefulness of the feedback they receive and that their targets are under constant review.

## Inclusion

**Strong standard**

Leaders are highly ambitious that every trainee will become a 'great teacher'. Trainees feel truly included and welcomed into the programme community. The commitment to inclusive

practice is deeply embedded throughout the curriculum, policy and practice. Staff are very well trained and consistently model inclusive behaviours. Trainees with barriers to their learning or wellbeing and those identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities get tailored support, such as reasonable adjustments, adapted resources, access to the curriculum and programme extensions. As a result, trainees with barriers to their learning can make progress at least as well as their peers.

Trainees thrive in a positive culture where they feel safe to reach out for help should they have any concerns or barriers to their learning. Trainees are taught how to take responsibility for their own physical, emotional and mental health so that they develop resilience in preparation for their teaching careers. Expert staff signpost them to external professionals when specialist support is needed.

Trainees grow in confidence to celebrate their individual identities. They become inspired to play an active part in replicating the provider's inclusive culture within their own workplaces and school placements.

## Leadership

**Strong standard**

Leaders have a clear focus on the interests of trainees and providing opportunities for the next generation of teachers. They offer a range of flexible programmes to recruit and train the next generation of teachers. For many trainees, the course opportunities available are life changing. Leaders use their expertise very well to inspire trainees to develop a lifelong thirst for continually improving their teaching.

Leaders carry out rigorous and well-embedded quality assurance. They continually evaluate and review the curriculum to ensure it remains ambitious and relevant. Leaders engage very well with trainees, mentors and school leaders to inform their accurate assessment of the strengths of their provision and priorities for improving it further.

Leaders are diligent in their checks to ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of the Department for Education’s mandatory compliance criteria for initial teacher training. They also check carefully that statutory duties are met. For example, they make sure that safer recruitment practices are used when recruiting trainees.

Leaders create a culture of openness and transparency. They create a highly supportive environment where staff are free from bullying or discrimination and able to give honest feedback. They support seamless collaboration between academic and operational teams to ensure that the support for trainees is coherent and very well embedded.

## Professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing

**Strong standard**

Leaders are steadfast in their commitment to ensure that trainees can demonstrate the standards for teachers' professional behaviours. Trainees learn what professionalism means explicitly and how to put the values into practice. Tutors and mentors are admirable role models. As a result, trainees explicitly show pride in the positive impact they have on pupils' life chances.

Trainees quickly learn how to look after themselves by, for example, managing their time effectively and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Trainees grow to understand the high importance of the work that teachers carry out. They become lifelong learners, committed to continually improving their teaching knowledge, skills and professional behaviours.

Leaders have unapologetic high standards and expectations for trainee behaviour. They are precise in the language they use in documents such as course handbooks to ensure that trainees know the importance of high attendance. Staff track trainees' attendance closely. They help trainees develop the professional resilience which enables them to keep up with the programme, despite some facing barriers to learning.

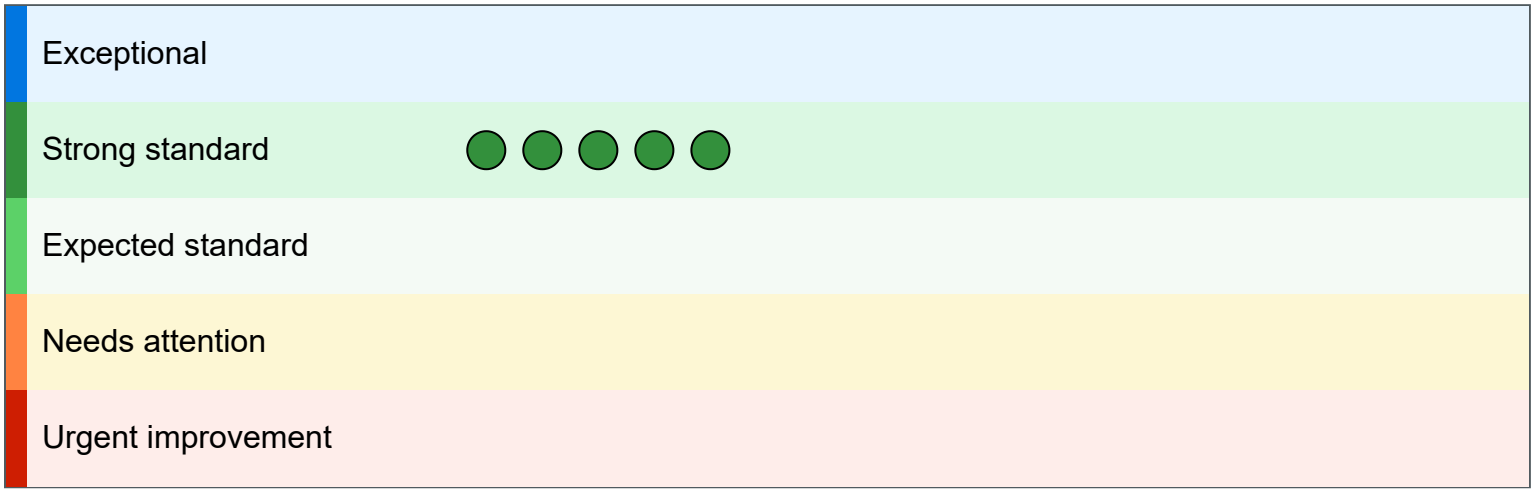
Leaders work closely with all partners to ensure that trainees experience an environment free from bullying or discrimination. They model values of equity and compassion in their work with trainees.

## Next steps

Leaders, and those responsible for oversight, should continue to strengthen and refine the systems and processes that underpin their highly effective primary phase initial teacher education, ensuring that their existing priorities are fully implemented and have a genuinely transformative impact on trainees.

---

## 2. Secondary




## Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met

# Strong standard

## Achievement

**Strong standard**

Trainees develop excellent knowledge and skills to teach their subject and phase with confidence. The curriculum, strengthened by intensive training and practice, trains them to understand and apply the principles of effective teaching. They implement learning well in schools, including with learners who have barriers to their learning. Trainees refine and hone their practice through subject sessions, mentor guidance and regular feedback.

Trainees feel well prepared for the realities of teaching. Leaders use a proactive safety net system to identify anyone needing extra help and act quickly to keep them on track, resulting in high completion and retention rates. Leaders provide flexible routes, tailored support and clear expectations, enabling trainees with barriers to achieve highly. Most trainees, including those with additional needs, secure sustained employment or progress into further training.

Trainees develop a secure understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs effectively.

## Curriculum, teaching and training

**Strong standard**

Leaders deliver a highly ambitious, research-informed curriculum that prepares trainees very well for teaching their secondary phase subject(s). They draw on high-quality research and statutory guidance to keep the programme current and ensure it meets and exceeds national expectations. Leaders have created a professional community of expert tutors and mentors who, together, shape, refine and deliver content that supports trainees' development.

In the secondary phase, leaders draw on subject experts to design content with precision and depth, ensuring each discipline has a clear purpose and strong knowledge base. They also embed inclusive practice within subject content, helping trainees learn to teach inclusively as a natural part of their training.

Leaders give very clear and careful thought to the planning and sequencing of the curriculum. They plan the required intensive training and practice in a way that is seamlessly integrated with the broader curriculum. This systematic approach to sequencing enables trainees to build deep knowledge and make independent decisions about their teaching.

Trainees benefit from a curriculum that combines theory and practice particularly well. Centre- and school-based training aligns closely, enabling trainees to apply theory in real classrooms. Tutors and mentors work collaboratively to secure trainees' subject knowledge and address misconceptions, strengthening the link between the different parts of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that key topics such as safeguarding are woven throughout the curriculum. For example, the school-based training for trainees ensures they deepen their knowledge and understand how to keep pupils safe, follow procedures and recognise signs of concern.

The coverage of inclusive teaching in the curriculum is a notable strength in that it prepares trainees very effectively to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other barriers to learning. Trainees learn quickly how to adapt their instruction, understand diverse needs and identify barriers to learning. Subject booklets provide practical strategies to support inclusive planning and teaching which trainees can apply when on placement.

Trainees benefit from very high-quality mentoring. Leaders set clear expectations for mentors and communicate these well to both mentors and their schools. Mentoring activities align very well with the sequence of topics in the curriculum, giving trainees structured opportunities to apply learning. Trainees feel well supported and describe mentors and tutors as 'inspiring' and 'aspirational'.

Assessment of trainees is continuous and developmental. Trainees are given clear targets in review meetings. Leaders track trainees' progress carefully, ensuring trainees are ready to teach. Consequently, trainees reflect on and evaluate their teaching in order to make meaningful improvements.

## Inclusion

**Strong standard**

Leaders and staff create a positive, professional and welcoming culture where trainees feel valued and confident to share their needs. From the start, trainees know that leaders take their wellbeing and success seriously.

Leaders and staff act purposefully to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing. Regular communication ensures that specific needs are identified early. Trainees who disclose additional needs receive rapid and tailored support, including pre-recorded sessions and enhanced mentor and tutor help. Leaders work purposefully with schools to implement reasonable adjustments for disabled trainees and those with protected characteristics effectively.

Leaders now offer a flexible teaching apprenticeship programme as a deliberate and strategic move to widen access for individuals already working in schools, including those facing financial barriers. Leaders demonstrate dedication to growing an increasingly diverse teaching workforce, including from different socio-economic backgrounds. Trainees value the fact that leaders recognise and respect their backgrounds and circumstances.

Through ambitious and inclusive admissions processes, leaders identify trainees who may have potential barriers to learning, while maintaining high expectations. Trainees who need to gain qualifications or subject knowledge enhancement receive structured support to close gaps. Flexible study options allow trainees to pause or adjust their programme if their circumstances change.

## Leadership

**Strong standard**

Leaders set a clear vision for an ambitious, research-informed curriculum that prioritises high-quality training and the best interests of trainees. Their values focus on inclusion, evidence-informed professional learning and strong partnerships with schools. This vision shapes every aspect of the programme, from pathway design to quality assurance. Leaders

use trainee information carefully to design routes that meet individual needs and address gaps in the teaching workforce.

Those overseeing the provision understand their roles well. They hold leaders to account through robust committees, advisory boards and regular reviews. These groups go beyond statutory duty compliance. Leaders analyse and draw on best practice nationally to drive improvement. They are outward facing and collaborate very well with professional partners, including research groups and other higher education institutions, to ensure that the curriculum reflects classroom practice and national developments.

Leaders have well-embedded systems that drive consistent improvement and enable highly effective oversight. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of their provision and accurately identify improvement priorities. Leaders monitor improvement closely to ensure they are having the desired effect and that their actions align with wider university priorities.

Leaders make professional learning for staff and mentors a high priority. They provide extensive, regularly updated training and clear progression pathways, including mentoring qualifications and higher education credits. Stakeholders such as schools, tutors and mentors value the deep support that enables them to guide trainees effectively.

Leaders foster a respectful, supportive environment free from bullying or discrimination. Academic and operational teams work seamlessly to provide coherent support for trainees from application to successful graduation.

Leaders ensure that the provision meets the Department for Education's mandatory compliance criteria for initial teacher training and other relevant statutory guidance such as the 'Prevent' duty and the Equality Act 2010. Leaders follow safer recruitment practices when recruiting trainees.

## Professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing

**Strong standard**

The curriculum extends beyond the statutory requirements by promoting strong professional behaviours, thoughtful decision-making and early leadership skills. The clear sequencing gradually reduces support so that trainees learn to make independent informed decisions in line with those required of a proficient teacher.

Leaders set clear and high expectations for trainees' professional behaviour, attendance and commitment to learning. From the start of the programme, every opportunity is taken to reinforce these expectations through mentoring, training and tutor discussions.

Leaders prioritise high-quality support, advice and guidance so trainees can complete the programme successfully. They think carefully about workload and design a structured system that supports trainees effectively.

Trainees learn highly effective strategies to build resilience, manage workload and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Throughout the curriculum, trainees receive practical guidance on recognising stress and taking care of their wellbeing. Clear timescales and priorities are shared regularly so that trainees know precisely what is expected of them.

Leaders create a positive learning environment and ensure that trainees are treated with utmost respect. They take a firm stance against bullying, harassment and discrimination. Trainees know how to report concerns, and leaders act quickly and appropriately if issues arise.

Trainees feel very well supported, know how to seek help and show readiness to enter the teaching profession with positive habits and excellent professional conduct.

## Next steps

Leaders, and those responsible for oversight, should continue to strengthen and refine the systems and processes that underpin their highly effective secondary phase initial teacher education, ensuring that their existing priorities are fully implemented and have a genuinely transformative impact on trainees.

---

## What it's like to be a trainee at this provider

Leaders aspire to train 'great teachers'. School leaders confirm that this aspiration is consistently realised. Leaders' meticulous planning of their research-informed curriculum prepares trainees to teach extremely well in their chosen phase and/or subject. Trainees flourish because the provider and partner schools maintain highly productive working relationships that strengthen every stage of their training. Trainees learn critical knowledge and skills from the outset of the course. Leaders are systematic and sensitive in their response to feedback in order to make changes that further improve the curriculum when it is necessary.

Trainees value the opportunity to balance academic study with meaningful work in schools. From the earliest point of contact with the provider, trainees are known as individuals. They feel 'valued as individuals'. Trainees quickly learn to take responsibility for overcoming any barriers to their own learning. This ensures that trainees achieve well, developing the knowledge and skills they need to teach their phase and subject(s) well.

Leaders work very well with partner schools to create a safe, nurturing and trusting culture in which trainees feel supported throughout their training. As a result, trainees consistently report high levels of satisfaction with their course. Trainees benefit from professional, streamlined processes that are simple to navigate and designed to help them succeed. High professional standards permeate all aspects of the course. Combined with the carefully devised training programme, this prepares trainees extremely well for the realities of teaching.

Trainees develop a secure understanding of inclusion and learn about the specific challenges faced by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Mentors and tutors teach trainees how to adapt the curriculum precisely so that all learners can access it. Trainees strengthen their practice further by observing experts applying the principles of

inclusion with precision and confidence. As a result, trainees enter the profession as confident, capable teachers.

---

## About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

• There are three pathways: primary 5 to11, middle 7 to 13 or secondary 11 to 16.
• Trainees in both the primary and secondary phases study one of two routes. They are either undertaking a PGCE or an employment-based route, either with or without a PGCE qualification.
• There are 398 apprentices studying either the primary or secondary apprenticeship route and there are 143 on the non-apprenticeship route.
• There are a small number of trainees taking the assessment only route.

Inspection activities:
• Inspectors spoke with the vice chancellor of the university, the dean of the faculty of education, the director of programmes in the faculty of education during the inspection.
• Inspectors also spoke with lead tutors, tutors, lead mentors, mentors and heads of cohort to gather evidence about the arrangements for mentoring.
• Inspectors visited trainees in both their main school and second school placements. Inspectors also visited apprentices in their main school and second school placements.
• Inspectors spoke to a selection of former trainees to gather evidence about the impact of the training provided.

---

**Overall lead inspector:**
Linda Culling, His Majesty's Inspector

**Primary phase lead inspector:**
Jo Brinkley, His Majesty's Inspector

**Secondary phase lead inspector:**
Michelle Payne, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**
Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Bedeau, His Majesty's Inspector
Laura James, His Majesty's Inspector
Luke Stubbles, His Majesty's Inspector
Marian Feeley, His Majesty's Inspector
Ed Mather, His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

# Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 26 January 2026

## Number of partners and trainees

| Education phase | Number of training partners / partner colleges | Number of trainees |
|---|---|---|
| **Early years** | N/A | |
| **Primary** | N/A | 189 |
| **Secondary** | N/A | 354 |
| **Further education and skills** | N/A | |

## Our grades explained

**Exceptional**

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

**Strong standard**

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

**Expected standard**

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of training. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

**Needs attention**

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

**Urgent improvement**

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of training.

**The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)** inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026

© Crown copyright