

Colchester Teacher Training Consortium SCITT

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Lead inspector

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11).
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. The Colchester Teacher Training Partnership SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) works in partnership with fourteen schools in the Colchester area to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses for the 11–16 age range. It was established by the group of schools in order to meet local needs and offers training towards the post graduate certificate of education (PGCE) in design and technology, English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 29 trainees.
4. The partnership also offers a separately accredited route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through the graduate teacher programme (GTP) in a range of subjects including SCITT subjects but also in some other subjects, for example drama, psychology and religious education. Both routes are closely aligned with the same management and structures in each.

5. This provision was inspected at the same time as the SCITT and is the subject of a separate report.
6. The schools provide a variety of contexts in which to train. The provider attracts a significant number of mature entrants with family responsibilities. A new consortium director took up post in January 2009.

Key strengths

The key strengths are:

- the strongly collegiate nature of the partnership with an ethos of mutual support and good communication that provides a secure and effective learning environment for the trainees
- the high levels of commitment from all members of the partnership that contribute to the high levels of dedication and satisfaction among trainees
- rigorous selection procedures that result in the recruitment of strong trainees
- good training grounded in effective classroom practice and delivered by a range of skilled current practitioners
- regular assessment that is thoroughly moderated
- strong leadership that has strengthened and refined the provision
- strong personal support that has allowed many with challenging personal circumstances to achieve successful outcomes.

Recommendations

In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:

- refine subject knowledge auditing to enable trainees to have a sharper understanding of where their strengths and weaknesses lie and increase their capacity to drive their own improvement
- develop mentors' ability to set targets that focus increasingly on learning and less on operational matters as trainees progress, and ensure all quality assurance activities focus on this aspect of mentoring.

In order to strengthen strategic leadership, the partnership should:

- explore opportunities for subject leaders to form links with other organisations that will extend their ability to anticipate and plan for change
- consolidate and embed the recently introduced tracking systems in order to allow greater use of the information on trainee progress when evaluating the impact of training.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. Care is needed when considering proportions because of the small numbers in cohorts. However, all trainees have been at least satisfactory over time and the number attaining at good or better levels has been rising steadily. There is a marked improvement for the current cohort. At the late stage in the training when the inspection took place, the provider's data, verified by the inspection, showed that attainment is securely good. Trainees are well organised and committed to the needs of their pupils. They are highly reflective practitioners able to make good use of the research techniques that are an important feature of the training. They manage pupils' behaviour well, are confident in the classroom and able to use an appropriate range of assessment techniques in their teaching. They prepare good resources including the use of ICT to inspire and engage their pupils. They are resilient and adaptable due to the effective pastoral support they receive. Trainees have an appropriate experience of teaching across key stages 3 and 4, but a proportion of trainees expressed less confidence in being able to teach in Year 11. Trainees are able to plan successfully to enable pupils to meet the aims of the lessons, but demonstrate a slightly weaker understanding of planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and how to use teaching assistants effectively in the classroom.
8. The course attracts a large number of applicants and administrative staff are proactive in supporting applicants who appear to have potential, in order to ensure they apply. Effective selection procedures allow the provider to identify and select trainees with the required attributes to become successful teachers. The process for selection is rigorous and where necessary, additional requirements are given before the offer of a place on the course is finalised. This might include the requirement to undertake booster courses to improve subject knowledge or school placements to increase the applicant's experience of a school setting. The selection process allows trainees' strengths and areas for development to be accurately identified and the provider uses the information to devise individual training plans which meet the needs of trainees well. Withdrawals from the course are low and mainly for personal reasons. Trainees make good or better progress and most trainees go on to employment in local or consortium schools with some moving quickly on to more senior positions after their first year in teaching. Evaluation of the process has led to improvements such as the inclusion of a requirement to interact with pupils in a teaching situation.
9. The various training sessions fit together well. The topics in the general studies sessions are taken further with a subject specific focus in the subject sessions which run immediately afterwards. Good use is made of assignments which the trainees enjoy and which they see as relevant to their classroom practice, which is provided in schools in suitably contrasting contexts. Formal and informal observations by a wide range of professionals allow the trainee to benefit from a varied and complementary range of good and effective feedback on their practice. Interim assessments are good and lead to targets for improvement which are regularly reviewed. Assessment procedures are

externally validated as rigorous and accurate, especially for the assignments that contribute to master's level qualifications.

10. Subject knowledge audits are effective and trainees find them useful. However, the responsibility for tracking progress towards subject targets is largely the trainees' responsibility and a sharper focus on monitoring this is necessary in order to accelerate progress, in particular in moving trainees from grade two to grade one. Improved tracking of trainees' overall progress is allowing the provider to intervene where it is faltering, but the system is still evolving and is not yet fully embedded in subject leaders' monitoring or feeding into all aspects of self-evaluation. Some effective work has been undertaken to reduce the variability in the quality of the targets which mentors set for trainees. However, there are still instances where the targets are not increasing in challenge and complexity as the trainee progresses and sometimes are focused on operational matters and not on improving pupils' learning. The careful but flexible choice of second school placements provides individualised and contrasting experiences for trainees. The number of trainees opting to study for masters level qualifications is rising and trainees undertaking this additional course of study are positive about the work which they feel gives them a more rounded view of teaching and learning.
11. Resources are deployed efficiently across the consortium and there is additional funding available that trainees can bid for to meet their specific needs or interests. Effective links with schools in the area allow the provider to tap into the high quality subject expertise that is available. Close working arrangements between schools give the provider good knowledge of where expertise lies. In addition, good use is made of external consultants where there are gaps in subject leadership.
12. The generosity of head teachers in allowing time for subject leaders and assistant subject leaders to fulfil their roles in the partnership adds value to the outcomes for trainees.
13. Trainees respond positively to the quality and range of support provided for them. Good succession planning ensures the quality is maintained where there is staff turnover and supports consistency across the partnership. Systematic monitoring procedures are followed by regular feedback to the steering committee in order to ensure provision is of a consistently good quality. The committee is well attended and has a clear focus on trainees' outcomes. Trainees from both of the courses covered by the provision meet weekly which helps to ensure the strengths of each route are shared. Moderation procedures for assessments and assignments are secure and consistent. Excellent communication across the partnership and very high levels of commitment from participating schools lead to strong collegiality. Subject leaders and assistant leaders meet regularly to share good practice and improve consistency across subjects. There is excellent communication by programme administrators who are highly regarded by schools and trainees.
14. Good support for the well-being of trainees leads to most trainees achieving their challenging targets. There are examples of trainees with personal

difficulties receiving highly effective support to enable them to complete the course with only a minor reduction in attainment. Despite the lack of opportunity within partnership schools to experience a wide range of ethnic and cultural diversity, the provider makes every effort to ensure trainees feel confident in teaching in a range of contexts. Imaginative solutions, such as a visit to a school with a high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, have been well received by trainees who cited the experience as one of the highlights of the course.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

15. The provider has good capacity to improve the provision and outcomes for trainees based on a track record of improving attainment and trainee satisfaction that has recently increased sharply.
16. Managers at all levels conduct an impressive range of regular monitoring activities in order to ensure the quality and consistency of the provision. This feeds into self-evaluation that is accurate and based on the views of all stakeholders. For example, every term trainees complete an evaluation of the quality of subject studies and the support they receive from subject mentors. In addition they evaluate the usefulness of general studies sessions. The issues raised as a result of these evaluations are summarised and shared with the headteachers through the quality assurance sub-committee which reports each term to the full steering group. The strong collegiate nature of the provision and the generosity of headteachers in allowing time for training mean that all those responsible for monitoring and evaluation are well-equipped to fulfil their roles to a good standard. The steering group responds well to unexpected changes and finds creative solutions in order to maintain good trainee progress. Examples of this include the use of local authority expertise where there are gaps in the partnership's capacity and the development of one or even two assistant school subject mentors in each subject who work alongside leading mentors thus supporting succession planning.
17. The new course director provides excellent leadership and has made several carefully considered adjustments in order to simplify the process without losing rigour. Past trainees now employed in the consortium schools confirmed that issues they had raised and suggestions they had made have been acted upon.
18. Good use is made of the views of external partners. For example, mentoring has been improved as a result of the provider's response to the external examiner's evaluation. Accurate self-evaluation involves a measured analysis of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the provision and results in development plans that identify and prioritise areas for improvement. However, subject development plans vary in quality with some success criteria not sufficiently measurable to have an impact on outcomes. Good use is made of assessment information to shape future training.

19. The provider takes a carefully thought out strategic approach to the introduction of refinements for the provision. In order to extend the range of subjects on offer links are being developed with other providers in the area. New schools have been admitted into the partnership and the provider is willing to be flexible about the terms and extent of the involvement in order to meet the needs of all parties. Links with higher education providers are being further developed to benefit provision.
20. Monitoring visits include a range of well-chosen activities such as joint lesson observations with mentors, review of documentation and discussions with trainees and school leaders. Whilst these check that trainees' targets are being addressed in mentor meetings, they do not focus strongly enough on the monitoring of targets over time in order to strengthen the trainees' understanding of their longer term development requirements in relation to attainment grade criteria.
21. Reviews of subject courses by subject leaders allow them to adapt the training in the light of national developments. For example, mathematics trainees are aware of the Williams review and its findings and how changes in practice need to be made in the light of these. In order to strengthen subject leaders' ability to anticipate future developments more fully, there is scope for providing them with more opportunities to tap into initiatives and research in their subjects.
22. The provider is improving the quality of the information on the progress that trainees are making and increasingly using that information to refine the provision.
23. A new training centre is nearing completion which will help to address the challenge of providing centralised and accessible resources for trainee research.

Summary of inspection grades¹

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

		secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		secondary
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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