

Essex Schools Initial Teacher Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	The Harlow Centre Partridge Road Harlow Essex CM18 6TE
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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. Essex Schools Initial Teacher Training Partnership offers training leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) through the employment-based graduate teacher programme route into teaching. Secondary training places are offered in shortage and non-shortage subjects. Current partnership training subjects are art, business studies, citizenship, dance, design and technology, drama, English, geography, history, information technology, mathematics, media studies, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education, science, sociology and psychology. Most secondary training places are for the 11–16 age range but in a small number of cases places are offered in the 14–19 age range to match the requirements of the subject, for example business studies. Primary training places are offered in either the 3–7 or 4–11 age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 133 trainees on the training programmes; 89 in secondary and 44 in primary. These figures include a small proportion of self-funded trainees.

4. The partnership is between Essex local authority and 110 schools. The schools are located mainly in Essex but include a small number in Dagenham and Redbridge, Havering, Southend, Thurrock and Hertfordshire. An important focus of the partnership is to support local and regional recruitment into teaching, especially where this has been difficult in the past, such as in the Harlow area.

Employment based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
 - very high levels of enthusiasm, passion and commitment of trainees and trainers which promote high quality teaching for the benefit of learners
 - prioritisation of resources to meet identified training needs
 - outstanding training in high quality placement schools that provide a wide range of personalised training opportunities
 - high levels of success in meeting local recruitment needs
 - the positive impact of the established management team which draws on a breadth of experience and expertise within the team itself and from across the local authority
 - the very effective use of second placements to enhance trainees' progress by meeting their training and personal needs
 - continuous improvement to the quality of the training programme as a result of very effective analysis of trainees' progress and outcomes
 - the very good achievement of trainees, particularly on primary and mathematics training placements.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve secondary trainees' subject knowledge and their ability to apply this to teaching, the partnership should:
 - improve the consistency of high quality secondary subject specific training, particularly for small subject cohorts.
7. In order to improve the progress made by trainees, the partnership should:
 - improve the understanding, across the partnership, of the characteristics of outstanding trainees and how to provide challenge for trainees to become outstanding.
8. In order to develop a better shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision, the partnership should:
 - formalise the feedback to schools about the quality and impact of their training and what steps would help lead to improvement.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

9. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is outstanding. Trainees show very high levels of enthusiasm, passion and commitment to becoming high quality teachers for the benefit of their learners. This reflects a similar commitment from their trainers to focus on the needs of learners in the local region. Around four out of five trainees complete their training at a good or outstanding level. All groups of trainees make very good progress and achieve highly from their starting points. Almost all trainees gain employment; many before the end of their training. This demonstrates the success of the partnership in meeting local and regional recruitment needs very well, particularly where schools have traditionally found recruitment problematic in the past, such as in recognised shortage subjects like English.
10. Recruitment procedures place an equally strong emphasis on evaluating and selecting both the school and the trainee against transparent, fairly applied and well chosen criteria. The partnership aptly stresses the importance of applicants having strengths as independent learners, such as being reflective and proactive, so that they are well placed to benefit from the employment-based route. Applicants are specifically directed to enhance their experience of working with learners if this is not already a strong aspect. As a result of these strengths of practice the partnership recruits trainees with the potential to become good teachers; they achieve this potential and few withdraw from the course.
11. As a result of outstanding training which benefits from resources having been directed to meet school, group and individual trainee needs, trainees develop many strengths as teachers. They also take proactive responsibility for their own professional development. They have positive relationships with their pupils and manage their learning and behaviour effectively. Trainees use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and take into account pupils' learning preferences and particular learning needs when planning their lessons. Lessons are planned well because they are underpinned by trainees' good understanding of how to use assessment data. Lessons are delivered well because trainees are adept at using assessment for learning strategies and because they show confidence in their abilities.
12. Training encourages trainees to develop inclusive practices, for example they have good awareness of how to challenge and support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those trainees whose main placements are in special schools have a very good understanding of mainstream provision. The partnership makes good efforts to prepare trainees to teach in a culturally diverse society. Leaders have promoted an increasingly successful focus on using the second placement to explore diversity issues. However, although trainees know how to teach pupils whose first language is not English, the extent of their experience in this area is too dependent on the nature of the

placement schools and the success of trainers' efforts to seek out a broader range of diversity than is typically found in the local area.

13. Partnership schools are very good training environments. Trainers have high expectations of trainees and relationships between trainees and trainers are professional, open and positive. The large majority of mentoring is strong; trainees have their lessons observed frequently and receive detailed feedback. Targets set for trainees are pertinent to their stage of development and training programmes are frequently intensified and personalised so that particular needs can be met, for example through the particularly careful selection of the second placement school. Where trainees are identified as having the potential to be outstanding they are challenged well and are given opportunities to build upon their strengths, for example through being encouraged to lead training initiatives in their departments and schools. However, although trainees' attainment is accurately judged across the partnership there is some lack of clarity in the shared understanding of the characteristics of outstanding trainees and the most successful ways to challenge trainees to become outstanding. Nevertheless, schools have very high expectations for trainees and they ensure their needs are fully met by individualising the training programme. This is particularly the case for primary trainees, for example in the progress they make in understanding subject pedagogy and how to support their pupils in the non-core subjects.
14. Experienced external tutors with specific expertise make a significant contribution to trainees' progress. They provide additional challenge and direction to the training through: intensive scrutiny of trainees' evidence for their achievement of the QTS standards; rigorous analysis of trainees' strengths and areas for development as demonstrated through lesson observations; and perceptive, well-focused discussions with trainees and trainers. They moderate assessments well and ensure their accuracy.
15. Central training is also strong and highly valued by trainees. The well-structured course makes clear links between central and school-based training. These are recorded in training plans which are appropriately personalised by mentors, professional tutors, external tutors and trainees themselves. The inspection showed this practice to be particularly effective for current primary trainees, for those training to teach in the 3-7 age range and for those whose main placement is in a special school. Although central training has included sessions on changes to the 14-19 curriculum this has been followed up less consistently in secondary schools and trainees do not all have a deep understanding of how these changes might impact on their future work. Assignments and tasks make an excellent contribution to training because they are often linked to action research, reading and reflection and so help trainees to develop their understanding of how to support the needs of a wide range of learners.
16. Secondary subject training is good. In some cases, mathematics for example, it makes an exceptional contribution to trainees' progress because there is astute leadership and management of the subject. This training focuses on subject pedagogy, is up to date, reflects best practice, and builds on individual and group needs right from the start of the course. It makes excellent use of

expertise across the partnership such as through local authority advisors, leading edge practitioners and advanced skills teachers. For a small minority of trainees in small secondary subject cohorts, for example information and communication technology (ICT), subject specific training has been less effective or more limited in scope. When this is brought to the attention of leaders and managers or identified through internal monitoring it is appropriately addressed during the course. Nevertheless, the partnership is aware of how this impacts on equality of opportunity and has already planned enhanced subject training experiences for small cohort trainees for the following year.

17. The efficient and effective use of resources is a real strength of the partnership. It is targeted at ensuring consistency across the partnership as well as on meeting individual needs to support high levels of achievement for trainees. The prioritisation of funding to meet needs identified from monitoring and evaluation is strong. Differentiated training is provided to new and experienced mentors that results in high levels of attendance. Buddy systems support new training coordinators and encourage the sharing of best practice. Recruitment and selection strategies for shortage subjects such as English are strengthened and training intensified so that the recruitment and teaching of the subject are enhanced across the region. High levels of funding to enable mentors to jointly observe trainees on second placements and joint observations between external tutors and school-based trainers help increase trainees' rates of progress and ensure the rigour, accuracy and consistency of assessment.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 1

18. The partnership has outstanding capacity to improve further and build on its existing high quality. Schools and trainees are overwhelmingly positive about the effectiveness of the partnership and there is a high consensus of opinion about perceptions of key strengths – including organisation, support from the centre, the impact of the work of external tutors and the effectiveness of communication. Inspectors agree with these strengths. They lead to successful outcomes for trainees because all those in the partnership understand their roles, take responsibility and have a shared commitment to improvement and ensuring that the needs of learners in the region's schools are met.
19. Inspectors agree with the provider's judgements about its overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is rigorous and leads to the accurate identification of pertinent areas for improvement. It draws informally on the views of trainers through the work of external tutors and the contribution of mentors and professional tutors is sought at training meetings. It is referenced strongly to trainees' views, the analysis of trainees' achievement over time and the impact of any changes made to training programmes. The views of employers are gained through the representation of headteachers on the steering group and the proactive way in which they gather the views of other partnership headteachers to inform practice and improvement planning. The views of newly qualified teachers who are former trainees are informally sought;

their views are frequently taken on board. Increasing proportions of former trainees gain roles as mentors in schools and the responsibility the local authority has for the monitoring and support of newly qualified teachers ensures that the ongoing progress of former trainees is tracked. Testimony to the success of the programme is that in a recent evaluation of newly qualified former grade 1 trainees, all were reported as outstanding teachers at their first review point for the current year.

20. The provider anticipates and responds to change very effectively. Training is responsive to recommendations from reviews of the curriculum and to new approaches to assessment. The up-to-date nature of the training helps to ensure that trainees achieve well and raises their self-esteem, so giving them confidence in their professional roles. Primary trainees, for example, have a good understanding of the thematic approach to the curriculum, systems to assess pupils' progress and the teaching of reading through phonics. There are several examples of trainees leading training in their schools as a result of their reflective and often research-based responses to central training inputs. Central training is evaluated rigorously but the evaluation of subject specific training relies too heavily on trainees' evaluations. This creates the potential for weaker aspects of secondary subject training not to be identified and some training in small cohort secondary subjects is not fully up to date.
21. The strong use of creative approaches to tackling longstanding problems is particularly well exemplified by the provider's proactive work with Harlow schools, the strengthening of support for newly qualified teachers and the higher levels of risk taking in the recruitment of trainees into shortage subjects and the recruitment of trainees from under-represented groups. All these strategies are resulting in better recruitment and retention across the region. This responsiveness to local needs is also illustrated by the provider's incisive analysis of changes across the partnership. This leads to the prioritisation of resources to ensure that high levels of consistency across the partnership are maintained.
22. The strategic work of the partnership is very strong. It has resulted in improvements to outcomes for all groups of trainees – an increase in the proportion graded outstanding, increasing employment rates and decreasing withdrawal rates. The provider is able to draw on a highly experienced management team who work in school and initial teacher education development and inspection, regionally and nationally. The management group and steering committee have regular and wide ranging discussions about improvement priorities and their decisions are underpinned by the views of stakeholders. Whole course improvement plans are incisively focused on priorities identified from self-evaluation such as enhancing the impact of subject knowledge training, enriching trainees' experience of cultural diversity, the use of the second placement to raise levels of challenge and improvements in primary training for ICT and literacy. On-going in-year monitoring of progress results in appropriate and rapid adjustments being made. Any trainees at risk of underachievement are accurately identified and additional visits are arranged to ensure their training and personal needs are fully met.

23. A focus on training trainers to improve their push for trainees with the potential to be outstanding has been largely successful but it rightly remains an aspect of improvement focus. Improvement priorities are communicated well across the partnership and school staff are aware of the role they need to play in contributing to successful outcomes for trainees. Training for trainers has a very important emphasis in the drive for improvement and this training is aptly focused on the aspects that are identified from feedback and internal evaluation. An aspect that managers have identified for development for the coming year is the formalisation of the evaluation of impact of school-based training. External tutors already work proactively and effectively in this respect but the outcomes of their well-focused intensive discussions are not always formally recorded as development targets for the school. Schools are also being encouraged to evaluate the impact of their training and contribution to the partnership in a more formalised way.

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

		Employment-based routes
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	1
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	1
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1
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

		Employment-based routes
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?		1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1

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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