

# Swindon SCITT

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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<b>Provider address</b>	St Joseph's Catholic College Ocotal Way Swindon SN3 3LR
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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. Swindon School Centred Teacher Training Partnership (SCITT) is based at St Joseph's Catholic College, Swindon. The partnership consists of ten secondary schools. The lead school for the consortium is Dorcan Technology College.
4. The provider is accredited to offer training for 29 trainees in five secondary subjects in the 11–16 age range: design and technology, English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and science. The course leads to qualified teacher status (QTS) and either the Post Graduate Certificate of Education or the Professional Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), validated by the University of Bath.

## Provision in the secondary phase

### Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the excellent recruitment and selection procedures that attract applicants with the necessary skills and attributes to become good and sometimes outstanding teachers, who frequently find employment in partnership schools.
  - the exceptional pastoral and academic support from professional tutors and mentors, who ensure that trainees have equal opportunities to achieve and that retention rates are high.
  - the impressive collaboration between committed centre and school-based staff, who ensure that training is highly responsive to change and that trainees are well equipped to teach in a range of school contexts.
  - the well-planned and interactive professional studies and subject sessions, delivered by skilled practitioners who model good practice, that enable trainees to securely develop their subject knowledge and subject knowledge for teaching.
  - the effective communication between partnership schools and the central office that ensures any issues or inconsistencies in the quality of provision are identified at an early stage and are dealt with promptly.
  - the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in regular self-evaluation and the strongly shared commitment of the partnership to continuous improvement.

### Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- continue to enhance the effectiveness of all school-based trainers by:
    - ensuring more widespread use of the existing trainee grade characteristics to enhance formative and summative assessment
    - promoting effective use of the e-portfolio to provide trainees with timely and high quality feedback about their progress
    - continuing to share good practice in the setting of challenging targets.

7. In order to improve further the quality of provision across the partnership, the provider should ensure that:
  - there are planned opportunities for professional tutors and mentors to share outstanding practice so that the very best approaches influence the future development of the programme.
8. In order to improve further the quality of improvement planning, the provider should ensure that:
  - all improvement plans have clear and easily measurable success criteria that are more sharply focused on outcomes, especially the trainees' progress and attainment.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 2**

9. Inspectors agreed with the provider's assessment that most trainees make good progress and that the trainees' attainment is consistently good. Just over 80% of trainees have met the QTS Standards at a good or outstanding level during the past three years. On average, around 20% of trainees have attained the higher grade. Overall, while there have been some differences between cohorts, there has been improvement over time.
10. Trainees are highly professional and reflective and most act quickly on the good advice they receive. Many take risks in their teaching and some are making innovative use of ICT to enhance learning. The pace of learning in lessons is generally good because of the trainees' secure subject knowledge and good planning. Lessons are well structured and focus on meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. In lessons, trainees are now beginning to execute the strategies they have planned with greater confidence. Trainees use a range of approaches to ensure that behaviour is managed in a flexible and positive manner. In the best instances, trainees make helpful cross-curricular links between subjects. For example, one trainee imaginatively used gene theory from biology to illustrate sample space theory in a Year 9 mathematics lesson.
11. Arrangements for recruitment and selection are exceptionally well devised. Consequently, the provider recruits motivated trainees who have the skills and personal attributes to become good and outstanding teachers. Prospective trainees are directed towards subject knowledge enhancement courses or tasks that prepare them well. Subject knowledge audits are revisited regularly and enable trainees to make good progress from the outset. Information gathered at interview and during induction is also used well to begin tracking the trainees' progress. The provider recruits strongly from under-represented

groups. Recruitment of male and mature trainees is higher than the sector average. The recruitment of Black and minority ethnic trainees improved strongly in 2010 and was above the sector average. Retention is generally high and has improved over a three year period. Trainees are employable, with around half taking up positions in partnership schools. Once in post, they often quickly take on responsibility or gain promotion. Many become mentors.

12. The strong links between well-planned centre and school-based training contribute well to the trainees' good progress. Trainees praise the breadth of central training and value highly 'learning on the job' in schools. This coherence has been enhanced by the development of 'mapping grids' that ensure all trainers know the timings of centre-based topics. Professional studies sessions are interactive and make effective use of a variety of external speakers. For example, during the inspection, trainees valued being taught strategies for organising group work, enhancing communication skills and supporting different types of learner in a session led by a group of Year 10 pupils. Trainees also benefit from opportunities to share knowledge through the seminar workshops that they lead. One ex-trainee summed up the views of others when describing the training as 'a community of people learning together'.
13. Subject leaders are skilled teachers. Subject sessions are used to model good practice and are tailored to the trainees' needs and interests. Subject leaders also ensure that trainees experience contrasting placements that broaden their teaching skills and prepare them well for working in different types of school. These sessions, alongside the professional studies programme and well-devised assignments, ensure that trainees improve their subject knowledge and their knowledge of how to teach their subject.
14. Regular tracking of progress made by trainees is underpinned by clear procedures and course documentation. Lesson observations and feedback from a range of teachers are frequent. Meetings with mentors are also very regular. Trainees appreciate the additional time that mentors often give them. Mentors and trainees work together well to identify increasingly focused targets for development. This process has been enhanced through recently circulated target setting support materials. Nevertheless, trainees are not always clear enough about what they need to do to achieve the most challenging of targets, particularly when moving from good to outstanding. In part, this is because the existing well-devised trainee grade characteristics, the QTS Standards Continuum, are not used consistently enough to support formative and summative assessment.
15. Resources are husbanded to improve outcomes for trainees. Trainees have access to a good range of training resources at the centre and in schools. All trainees are provided with a laptop during the course and can access support materials conveniently through the SCITT website. The recently developed e-portfolio is a tool to streamline the tracking of trainee progress, improve the quality of developmental feedback and reduce administrative burdens. It is embedding well. However, it is not yet being effectively used to provide trainees with timely and high quality feedback about their progress in achieving the QTS Standards.

16. Schools are strongly committed to the SCITT consortium and play an active role in driving improvement. One professional tutor summed up the partnership ethos when stating that working with trainees 'enhances everybody's experience' and that 'all have a responsibility to support trainees'. Headteachers see involvement in initial teacher education as an important professional development opportunity for their teachers. Staff often aspire to the role of mentor, seeing it as a key stage in their career progression. Professional tutors are highly regarded by trainees. In the best instances, they ensure that provision is of the highest quality and is tailored to the trainees' needs. Communication with the central office of the SCITT is prompt and any issues or inconsistencies are addressed quickly. Mentors benefit greatly from the face-to-face handover meetings between school placements and the opportunities available for joint observations with other mentors. The quality assurance manager ensures that new mentors have high expectations and understand their role. He provides schools with insightful feedback and helpful recommendations to bring about future improvements.
17. There is a strong professional tutor network and well-attended opportunities for mentors to meet. These meetings enable trainers to share information, discuss procedures and review programme developments. While there are informal opportunities to share good practice, there are currently too few formal occasions when trainers can showcase outstanding practice so that provision across the partnership is consistently of the very highest quality.
18. Frequent tutorials provide excellent pastoral and academic support for trainees and very strongly promote equality of opportunity. Support from mentors and professional tutors is also of the highest quality. Sensitive and well-structured support is available for those who are underachieving. There are noteworthy cases of individuals who had been at risk of failing completing the course successfully as a result of the support they receive. The provider tracks the progress of different groups of trainees closely. There are no significant differences in the outcomes for different types of trainee. Trainees have high levels of confidence that their concerns are listened to and are acted on promptly. The SCITT works actively with other regional providers to promote widening participation in teaching. The provider has been very successful in attracting under-represented groups, with the outcome that the current cohort represents an exceptionally diverse and vibrant group of trainees.
19. Training covers issues relating to teaching and cultural diversity thoroughly. In addition, mentor feedback often focuses on how trainees can better meet the needs of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most trainees have benefited from opportunities to develop their skills of teaching pupils with specific needs. One trainee, for example, has worked successfully with pupils with autism and another with pupils from Goa for whom English is an additional language.

## The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

**Grade: 2**

20. The well-respected programme director ensures that a full range of partners are involved in self-evaluation activities. Consequently, the actions that the provider takes to improve provision and outcomes for trainees are well devised and usually successful. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
21. Trainees say that they have a voice and feel listened to. The provider analyses a wide range of formal trainee evaluations about their training and placement experience and makes changes to the provision as necessary. Representatives for each of the five subject areas meet regularly as part of the 'Trainee Consultative Committee'. One of these trainees also represents the cohort at meetings of the SCITT Policy Committee. This group is chaired by a headteacher and its membership is fully representative of the wider partnership. It meets four times a year, reviews improvement plans and provides well-focused challenge.
22. The external examiner's reports are detailed and evaluative. The recommendations from these reports feed clearly into action plans. Wisely, with a change of external examiner due this year, the provider is committed to ensuring that the same level of scrutiny and challenge continues.
23. Headteachers are actively involved in a cycle of quality assurance visits to schools. They produce very high quality written reports that evaluate progress and make recommendations that are sharply focused on improving the quality of provision across the partnership. The work of professional tutors is often of a high quality. They are closely involved in quality assurance processes, particularly through the moderation visits they undertake during the final placement. Professional tutors also influence programme developments and improvement plan priorities. For example, they recommended that changes were made to reduce timetable loads during the last three weeks of the final placement to allow trainees to broaden their experience or to carry out action research.
24. However, while self-evaluation is accurate and frequent it does not always generate actions that fully address the few inconsistencies that are evident across the partnership. In particular there are sometimes missed opportunities to use the good information the provider gathers to ensure that outstanding practice is shared more widely. Consequently, the excellent practice seen in one or more schools has more limited impact on improving outcomes for trainees elsewhere.
25. The provider anticipates change and responds to local and national initiatives exceptionally well. Central training is flexible and highly responsive. The programme is reviewed regularly so that sessions encompass a wide range of relevant educational issues. Trainees have read recent influential reports; they

also have an up-to-date working knowledge of developments such as the English Baccalaureate and the potential implications of the 'pupil premium'. Sensitive to potential changes in the partnership, the provider wisely plans to introduce a session on the new academies next year. Subject leaders are very well placed to ensure that the trainees' subject knowledge and subject knowledge for teaching development are sharply focused on the learning and progress of pupils. Subject consultants from the University of Bath contribute well to this process and often bring a helpful research perspective which complements the highly practical school-based training. Initiatives such as the video reflection task and the recently developed e-portfolio offer creative solutions to improving the quality of the trainees' reflections and the impact of developmental feedback. Very effective partnerships with other regional providers of initial teacher education, such as that focused on increasing diversity in the teaching profession, are indicative of the provider's commitment to outward-looking collaborations that benefit the local and wider educational communities.

26. There is a coherent and well-formulated suite of action planning documents that clearly set out the provider's shorter- and longer-term development priorities. These include both the course improvement plan and the strategic plan. Actions taken by the provider since the last inspection have led to good improvements to provision and outcomes. This can be seen, for example, in areas such as the improved quality of trainee self-reflection and in the quickly improving quality and level of challenge in target setting. The action point identified at the last inspection has been fully addressed: trainees now experience a wider range of teaching opportunities that incorporate the full range of year groups, including Year 11.
27. The course improvement plan and strategic plan are reviewed regularly by the full range of stakeholders, most notably through the SCITT Policy Committee. In general, both plans have measurable success criteria but these are much clearer in the strategic plan. Moreover, while there are currently explicit targets for maintaining outcomes such as retention and employment, there are no measurable targets for improving the trainees' progress and attainment. Wisely, the provider recognises the need to ensure that all targets include easily quantifiable success criteria that enable sharper evaluation of the impact of initiatives on improving outcomes for trainees.

## Summary of inspection grades

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

### Overall effectiveness

		Secondary
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>2</b>
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?	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?	1

### Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
<b>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?</b>		<b>2</b>
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?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

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