

Buckingham ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 29/06/2015 Stage 2: 07/12/15

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors in accordance with the 'Initial teacher education inspection handbook'. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2015.

The inspection draws on evidence from each phase and separate route within the ITE partnership to make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

	Primary and Secondary QTS
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	2
The outcomes for trainees	2
The quality of training across the partnership	2
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	2

Primary and secondary routes

Information about this ITE partnership

- This is the first inspection of the Buckingham Partnership, which was formed in 2012 as a School Direct partnership. The partnership was awarded accreditation in 2013. Trainees follow core, School Direct and School Direct (salaried) routes. All trainees who successfully complete their training are recommended for qualified teacher status (QTS) and gain a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) from the University of Buckingham.
- The partnership offers a blend of academic and school-based teacher education over 12 months. The partnership also undertakes to maintain contact with former trainees and provide further support if required, for up to five years after they qualify and obtain their first post as a newly qualified teacher (NQT).
- Nearly all training is provided at the hub school, the Royal Latin School, in Buckingham, with some being provided for primary trainees at the primary hub school, Buckingham Primary School.
- Trainees complete their first and second placements at partnership schools in a wide area around Buckingham, including schools as far away as Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. In June 2015, there were 25 secondary, eight primary and two independent schools in the partnership.
- Secondary training is provided in mathematics, English, languages, physical education, design technology, computer science, history, geography, sciences, art, drama, psychology and religious studies.
- In July 2015, 39 trainees had completed their training, including nine primary (3–11) trainees and 30 secondary (11–16) trainees. Of these, six primary trainees were following the core route, with three on the School Direct route. Of the secondary cohort, 18 were following the core route with nine on the School Direct route and three on the School Direct (salaried) route. Secondary trainees specialised in English, mathematics, physical education, geography, history, computer science, sciences, design technology, psychology and religious studies.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited six schools at stage 1, observing nine trainees and one NQT teach. They also met with six other trainees to review their evidence in relation to the Teachers' Standards. At stage 2, inspectors visited nine schools and observed eight NQTs.

- Inspectors held meetings with individual trainees and NQTs, the Director of Partnership, school leaders, tutors, subject mentors, induction leaders and headteachers. A grading meeting was observed at stage 1. Inspectors took into account the 18 responses to the trainee online questionnaire, completed in June 2015. Inspectors also evaluated the actions taken by the leaders of the partnership to improve outcomes, training and leadership and management between the two stages of the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentary evidence, including information on recruitment and selection, statutory safeguarding and compliance with the initial teacher training criteria, evidence of assessment and feedback, trainees' teaching evidence and transition targets. The inspection team also reviewed the partnership's analysis of outcomes for trainees, the self-evaluation and improvement plans and the partnership website, online blogs and other training resources.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce HMI, lead inspector (stages 1 and 2)

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Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership are:

- the high completion and employment rates for trainees on all routes, which are above national averages
- the effective blend of high-quality training, personalised mentoring, coaching and tutoring, which is responsive to the needs of trainees and promotes their high levels of reflection and resilience
- the strong subject knowledge among partnership trainers, tutors and mentors, which ensures that trainees develop good pedagogy and understanding of their subject and phase
- effective communication between the partnership and schools, including after the training has been completed, which enhances trainees' and former trainees' development as teachers
- the vision and drive of the Director of Partnership and her leadership and administrative team, which ensures that trainees are well-prepared to teach

- effective and detailed quality assurance, which promotes the strong professional development of school-based mentors and tutors.

What does the primary and secondary partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Ensure that all trainees gain sufficient experience of a wider range of schools, including those:
 - in challenging socio-economic circumstances
 - that are judged to 'require improvement', particularly for trainees in the primary phase
 - where pupils speak English as an additional language
 - where pupils are lower attaining or harder to reach
- Strengthen leadership and management further, by:
 - basing the evaluation of outcomes more closely on trainees' impact on pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the rationale for continued visits and support for NQTs is communicated clearly to non-partnership schools.

Inspection judgements

1. The overall effectiveness of the Buckingham Partnership is good. The partnership is compliant with all of the initial teacher training (ITT) criteria and meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding and the promotion of equality and diversity. Leaders of the partnership ensure that the quality of training across the partnership is consistently effective and that trainees all make good progress towards becoming good or outstanding by the time of their final assessment. The partnership is maturing rapidly and gaining a well-deserved reputation for producing well-prepared NQTs who meet local needs.
2. Employment rates are higher than those found nationally. Nearly all trainees in the primary and secondary phases have gained employment, irrespective of the routes followed. Trainees are employed within the partnership and in more distant schools in the region. The very small numbers of trainees who have not obtained positions because of complex personal or health reasons have all completed the training successfully and reached above the minimum level of practice.
3. Feedback provided to the inspection team from headteachers and induction tutors confirmed that all trainees have acquired strong subject knowledge and the practical strategies they need in order to teach successfully. One senior leader from a secondary school said that the quality of NQTs from the partnership had been 'transformational' in her school.

4. There are no marked differences in the outcomes of different groups of trainees, including gender or ethnic group or for different routes. Trainees following the School Direct (salaried) route told inspectors that they felt increased pressure, but because of the partnership's flexible approach and personalised mentoring and training, they felt well supported and reached equally high standards as other trainees.
5. Trainees have a strong understanding of the teachers' standards. They are highly reflective and responsive to feedback. As NQTs, their resilient approach to reflection has become a habit and supports their continued development as new teachers.
6. Following recommendations made at stage 1, it is evident that trainees and NQTs are now focusing more closely on planning lessons with the needs of pupils in mind. They are also beginning to evaluate the success of their teaching by its impact on pupils' progress. Partnership leaders know when trainees have reached a significant turning point in their thinking because they talk about what 'they' (the pupils) will learn rather than what 'I' (the teacher) will do.
7. Trainees receive a good grounding in marking, feedback and assessment, which prepares them well for the demands of their first post in schools as NQTs. Some are understandably daunted by the challenge of keeping on top of their workloads while they are still relatively inexperienced, but trainees and NQTs demonstrate a good understanding of how to make sure that written and oral feedback leads to better progress for pupils.
8. The partnership ensures that trainees have practical experience of planning for pupils with English as an additional language, but some trainees still note that they would like further experience of this in order to prepare them for changing cohorts and teaching elsewhere in the country. One NQT told an inspector that 'I want to be prepared for change'.
9. Trainees are well prepared to contribute to school life when they take up their first post as NQTs. They have a good range of behaviour management strategies and nearly all are extremely skilled at forming purposeful relationships with their classes and with the staff in their schools and departments. Most NQTs seen during the inspection were taking on additional duties in the school, including bus duty and responsibility for a tutor group. They are also making a rich contribution to the life of the school through enrichment activities, including sports clubs and choirs, without compromising their day-to-day teaching. Some NQTs are already taking on leadership roles within departments.
10. All trainees demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. Inspectors saw beautifully organised classrooms, with

helpful displays that pupils are in the habit of using productively to support their learning. School leaders told the inspection team that NQTs from the partnership set a strong example not only when compared with NQTs from other providers, but also with longer-standing members of staff.

11. Trainees are well-placed to make assessments and prepare their pupils for tests and examinations. The partnership training has prepared NQTs well for dealing with change and the unexpected because they are resilient and receptive to advice and guidance, actively seeking and thriving upon constructive criticism. This is as a result of the open, developmental and coaching approach taken by the partnership, which sets the tone for trainees when they join schools.
12. Trainees value their training highly. Since the stage 1 inspection, the core training for secondary and primary trainees takes place in the hub school, in order to cultivate a collegiate atmosphere for the trainees and foster mutual support and networking. Generic and statutory training is extremely well regarded, but specialist subject and phase training even more so. Trainees benefit from a well-planned second placement in a contrasting school, which provides them with useful experience and breadth of understanding which they put to good use in their main placement and in their first post as a NQT.
13. A coherent combination of theory, practice rooted in research and the acquisition of a well-stocked toolkit of strategies gives trainees a sound start and helps them to feel confident in their first posts. Some NQTs told the inspectors that they often refer back to their training notes when faced with new challenges in their first term because they are confident that they will provide useful guidance.
14. The partnership provides more than just practical advice for trainees and NQTs: it also ensures that trainees and former trainees are kept up to date with theoretical, pedagogical and subject-based research. One former trainee told the inspection team that they really value the way the Director of Partnership sends them links to important scholarly articles based on their individual interests.
15. Primary trainees benefit from focused training and specialist advice based at the primary hub school. Their training includes theoretical and practical experience of synthetic phonics, ensuring they are well prepared for teaching early reading. All trainees gain a useful understanding of special educational needs through planned time at a partner special school. Primary trainees are provided with a strong grounding in the teaching of mathematics, including securing mastery and effective use of practical apparatus.
16. All NQTs told the inspection team that the training had been challenging, but that they had come out of it 'stronger' and more able to cope with the demands of their first year in teaching. One NQT commented, 'you realise when you

start, how well prepared you are'. It is also encouraging that the partnership maintains such close contact with the former trainees. They have a contractual commitment to maintaining a role in the former trainees' careers for up to five years and this has already proved useful to many NQTs early in the partnership's history.

17. The Director of Partnership, other leaders and the newly strengthened administrative team all work together to develop the strong vision of the partnership. They are fully focused on continuous improvement to ensure that trainees are well-prepared to teach and that even more trainees reach an outstanding standard. A demanding and careful process of recruitment and selection ensures that trainees are well qualified and suitable for the programme.
18. Leaders of the partnership responded promptly to the areas for development identified at stage 1 and made immediate improvements in order to reinforce the leadership team and assure greater consistency among mentors. The team of lead tutors was strengthened through greater accountability. Lead tutors are given time to carry out more quality assurance, including visits to mentors in schools. As a result, lead tutors are beginning to play a more strategic role in the development of the partnership and are having a direct impact on the consistency of mentoring. The lead tutors and strengthened administrative team are a crucial part of the partnership and are developing well as leaders in their own right.
19. Leaders of the partnership also made practical and sensible improvements to the partnership's record keeping and paperwork to assure a closer focus on the impact of trainees' teaching on pupils' progress. All feedback proformas and self-evaluation sheets start with questions about pupils' learning. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of the improvements, but leaders of schools in the partnership report that communication from the partnership is consistently strong, not just for trainees and NQTs, but also for other staff.
20. Leaders of the partnership are fully aware of the need to provide trainees with a broader experience of schools in different circumstances, including those in areas of socio-economic challenge, those with pupils who are at an early stage of learning English and those where pupils are lower-attaining. Inspectors identified this as an area for development at stage 1. The partnership has gone some way to tackling this and has widened the net of partnership schools, including those schools judged to require special measures or improvement.
21. Detailed information about trainees' transition targets and assessment information helps to get each NQT off to a good start. Assessment of trainees blends together lesson observation, trainees' reflections and theoretical and practical assignments in a rounded and carefully nuanced approach. Some NQTs and former NQTs are able to benefit from follow-up visits by tutors in the

partnership in order to gauge how well they are settling in and also to support the partnership's self-review and drive to improve. This is a very useful and potentially productive continuation of the close relationship formed between trainees and the partnership.

22. However, some schools that are not in the partnership were unclear about the purpose of follow-up visits to NQTs in schools and were not able to see the full value of this. Some schools were therefore not making the most of the considerable resources and expertise available to them from the partnership even if there were no trainees in placements at their schools.
23. Leaders of the partnership have an accurate evaluation of its strengths and what still needs to improve. The partnership actively seeks feedback on training and the quality of trainees. Action planning to improve and grow the partnership is based on a defined response to feedback from schools and trainees and is realistically timescaled.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' and newly qualified teachers' (NQTs') teaching:

Bourne End Academy, Bourne End
Buckingham Primary School, Buckingham
Elizabeth Woodville School, Milton Keynes
Grendon Underwood Combined School, Aylesbury
Kingsthorpe College, Northampton
Ousedale School, Newport Pagnell
Simon de Senlis Primary School, Northampton
Sir Herbert Leon Academy, Milton Keynes
The Buckingham School, Buckingham
The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe
The Royal Latin School, Buckingham
Waddesdon Village Primary School, Aylesbury
The Warriner School, Banbury

ITE partnership details

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	Stage 2	7 December – 9 December 2015
Lead inspector	Janet Pearce HMI	
Type of ITE partnership	SCITT	
Phases provided	Primary and Secondary	
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected	
Previous inspection report	N/A	
Provider address	The Royal Latin School Chandos Road Buckingham MK18 1AX	



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