

The Cherwell OTSA SCITT Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 19 June 2017 Stage 2: 20 November 2017

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector 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 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?	1
The outcomes for trainees	1
The quality of training across the partnership	1
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	1

Primary and secondary routes

Information about this ITE partnership

- The Cherwell OTSA partnership is a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) provider based in Oxford. The partnership offers primary and secondary School Direct and School Direct (salaried) routes into teaching. Trainees who successfully complete their training are awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). Trainees are known as 'associate teachers' during their time on the programme. Some trainees opt to study for a postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) provided by Oxford Brookes University.
- The SCITT is part of the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance (OTSA), which comprises over 200 primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions.
- The SCITT is based at The Cherwell School, which is part of the River Learning Trust. The accounting officer for the partnership is also the chief executive for the trust.
- In 2016/17, 44 trainees followed the salaried route into teaching, of whom 21 trained in the primary phase. Of the 32 trainees following the non-salaried route, 30 were trained in the secondary phase.
- The SCITT has been operating since 2015. This was its first inspection.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited six schools at stage 1, observing seven trainees.
- At stage 2, inspectors visited six schools to observe seven newly qualified teachers (NQTs). One trainee was observed at both stages of the inspection.
- Inspectors had telephone conversations with school leaders for three NQTs employed in schools outside the partnership or area.
- Compliance with the criteria for initial teacher training (ITT) and statutory requirements, including safeguarding, was checked.
- Inspectors 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.
- Meetings were held with individual trainees and NQTs. Inspectors also met with the director of the SCITT, the quality assurance officer, programme leaders and other staff responsible for aspects of the partnership. A meeting was held with senior leaders from schools in the partnership and members of the governing body, including the accounting officer.
- Inspectors met with mentors, a group of NQTs, some current trainees and recently qualified teachers (RQTs) who trained with the partnership.

- Inspectors took into account the 37 responses to the trainee online questionnaire from 2017.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, HMI, lead inspector

Wayne Stallard, OI, assistant lead inspector

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

Key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership

- The leadership of the Cherwell OTSA SCITT is outstanding. The director and his team are committed to excellence. Their clear moral purpose and drive have secured an excellent reputation for the partnership in a very short time.
- School leaders locally and further afield are delighted with the NQTs they appoint from the partnership. The work of the partnership is helping to meet local recruitment needs, including in schools in challenging circumstances.
- Leaders' energy, determination to improve and commitment to social justice shape trainees' highly developed values and ambition. As a result, trainees' professional integrity is impressive and their conduct is exemplary.
- Trainees develop into highly reflective, resilient and skilled teachers, whose work has a palpable impact on pupils' progress.
- A combination of excellent training and outstanding pastoral care prepares trainees extremely well for a career in teaching.
- Mentors' superb day-to-day support and feedback form the bedrock of the training programme and contribute immensely to trainees' skills and knowledge.
- Trainees' teaching is excellent, with most meeting the teachers' standards at the highest level. Nearly all trainees complete the programme and obtain employment. A very small number of trainees choose to defer completion or employment, but only for personal reasons.
- Partnership leaders and staff know trainees extremely well and are attentive to their professional development, performance and well-being throughout the programme. As a result, trainees feel completely supported and challenged.

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

The partnership should

- further develop trainees' skill in stretching and challenging pupils at all levels of ability, including those who are most-able, across the whole curriculum
- provide more opportunities for trainees to consider a career as the leaders and headteachers of the future.

Inspection judgements

1. The overall effectiveness of the Cherwell OTSA SCITT is outstanding. Leaders are completely dedicated to producing outstanding teachers for state schools locally and further afield. They are relentless in ensuring that the partnership continues to improve.
2. Leaders possess a deep and detailed understanding of the local and national education context. Trainees benefit hugely from the range of schools in the partnership and the contrasting placements they have. To be commended is the partnership's contribution to schools that are in areas of social deprivation and those that require improvement. In these schools, trainees and NQTs have made a tangible impact on pupils' progress in key areas. As one headteacher wisely commented, 'I can't take any risks with my pupils.'
3. The relationship between the SCITT and its partnership schools is excellent. For this partnership, meeting recruitment needs is not just about filling vacancies, but about ensuring that pupils benefit and make progress. Inspectors were deeply impressed with what school leaders told them about the impact trainees and NQTs were having on outcomes for pupils in secondary and primary schools.
4. The whole partnership ensures that trainees are superbly prepared for their careers in teaching. Trainees acquire a strong understanding of strategies and approaches that they draw upon in their posts as NQTs. They quickly establish themselves as respected professionals and role models for the pupils in their care. Current trainees spoke to inspectors about their pride in the teaching profession and how the training programme 'enthralled' them.
5. Trainees' teaching is excellent, with most of them teaching at an outstanding level. In addition, the quality of trainees' teaching has improved significantly since the partnership was set up.
6. Right from the start of the training programme, trainees are guided to focus on the impact their teaching makes on pupils' progress and attainment. When trainees consider their own teaching, their reflections quickly turn to evaluating what their pupils learned, rather than just analysing the strengths and weaknesses in their own performance. Trainees and NQTs are committed to ensuring that pupils make progress.
7. Programme leaders have sensibly ensured that trainees following different routes to teaching have equal opportunities to excel. The programme begins with summer programmes specially devised to help trainees to learn quickly about the routines of school. Such programmes help to launch trainees successfully into the rigours of the course and they are less daunted by the challenge ahead.

8. Central training has also made an excellent contribution to trainees' development as new teachers. Trainees value the opportunity to come together as a cohort and share their experiences. In their work as NQTs they frequently build on what they learned in subject-based and central training, particularly when challenged by new requirements in their employing schools.
9. Many trainees told inspectors about the powerful impact of training on their knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. In their first teaching posts, NQTs clearly demonstrate high expectations. They also respond sensitively and with compassion to the challenges some children experience outside of school. They deeply understand the responsibility and sense of duty that comes with being a teacher and are role models for children and young people.
10. Trainees and NQTs are skilled in assessing pupils' progress and adapting to different school systems. Primary trainees' teaching of systematic synthetic phonics is secure and they quickly acquire a strong understanding of progression through mathematics.
11. Trainees in the primary phase are very well prepared to teach across the broader curriculum, including physical education. Both secondary and primary trainees benefit from excellent specialist training to develop their subject knowledge.
12. Trainees benefit from inspiring training to help them support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Challenging input about vulnerable pupils has moved trainees and helped to confirm exactly why they wanted to become teachers. It is heartening that some former trainees have taken up posts in special schools for highly vulnerable pupils and that they are doing extremely well as NQTs.
13. Trainees' confident planning to meet pupils' needs struck inspectors during stages 1 and 2 and rightly impresses school leaders. NQTs enter their first appointment able to put together sequences of lessons with clear goals, focused on exactly what they want pupils to learn.
14. Trainees are adaptable and their willingness to learn is embedded by the time they take up their posts as NQTs. For example, inspectors met NQTs who are having to learn to teach in a new phase or teach a new subject. School leaders are extremely pleased with NQTs' flexibility and the way they contribute to the school. These qualities say a lot about the way that the partnership has prepared trainees for the realities of working in education.
15. Trainees manage pupils' behaviour and the routines of their classrooms extremely well. This is because of the meaningful training they have received about the reasons behind some pupils' challenging behaviour. Trainees are able

to use effective methods to prevent bullying. They are equally well equipped to minimise minor disruption, avoiding confrontation and maintaining a focus on learning.

16. Being selected to become a mentor in a partnership school is a significant achievement. Mentors are enthusiastic about their role, take their responsibility seriously and feel privileged to contribute to trainees' development. School leaders really value the contribution mentors make to the school and the overall professional development of teaching and learning.
17. Mentors provide practical guidance and rightly focus on pupils' progress. Through mentors' patience and empathy, together with encouraging but candid feedback, trainees are able to reflect deeply upon learning and the craft of the classroom. One NQT commented, 'I feel that my mentor really knew how I taught'.
18. The quality of mentoring has improved still further since stage 1 of the inspection. For example, leaders have insisted upon an even sharper focus on pupils' progress when mentors give feedback and discuss lesson observations with trainees. Mentors and tutors set trainees precise and challenging targets. Even better progress for trainees is the result.
19. The partnership's direct focus on tackling trainees' well-being has strengthened trainees' resolve to manage their workload, keep physically healthy and remain emotionally strong. As a result, they come to their first posts with a range of strategies that they can use to maintain a reasonable balance in their work life. NQTs have found themselves surprisingly relieved that they can cope with the demands of their first term as a teacher.
20. Leaders meticulously scrutinise the quality of mentors' feedback and the depth of trainees' reflections. There are many layers of checks to ensure that every trainee gets a first-rate experience. Leaders have made sure that trainees' e-portfolio of progress against the teachers' standards is streamlined and easy to access. As a result, leaders have a thorough overview of trainees' progress at any given time and at the key assessment points. In this way, concerns raised can be quickly tackled and put right.
21. The partnership's response to the findings at stage 1 of the inspection was typically prompt, intelligent and successful. During stage 2, it was already clear that there had been improvements to the way that the mentors at both placements communicate and work together to support trainees.
22. The partnership makes sure that trainees benefit from contrasting school placements. NQTs commented that they were expected to take more responsibility in their second placements and that this helped them to feel like a 'normal teacher'. Nevertheless, leaders carefully considered the feedback they

received from trainees and school leaders about arrangements for the second placement. In response, there have been some sensible changes to the length and focus of the second placement for both trainees, on both the salaried and non-salaried routes.

23. Leaders are not complacent about just recruiting trainees to meet local needs, but are determined to look outwards. They are wisely considering how they can ensure that trainees stretch and challenge pupils of all abilities and attainment, including the most able, across the full range of curriculum subjects.
24. Recently qualified teachers who trained with the partnership are well-established in their roles and rate their training extremely highly. They appreciate the ongoing contact they have with the partnership. Many are already taking up leadership roles in their schools. As the SCITT grows and develops, partnership leaders are rightly planning to encourage trainees to consider pathways to school leadership in the future.
25. Leaders have ensured that all trainees are completely up to date with their understanding of their duty to keep pupils safe. They provide compelling and memorable training sessions in order to help trainees learn about the 'Prevent' duty, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Leaders rightly emphasise to trainees the importance of safe and appropriate use of social media and how to assure that any internet profile is appropriate for a member of the teaching profession.
26. There are strict processes and procedures for recruiting and selecting potential trainees. There are many more applicants than places on the programme and interview days are demanding. In this way, the partnership ensures that it selects the right people for teaching.
27. Proof of the effectiveness of the partnership is the high completion rates, which have improved and are above national figures. For the small number of trainees who defer, there are highly complex and personal reasons for doing so. It is not because they are not doing well or because they are unsuitable.
28. Leaders rightly strengthened the partnership provision for primary trainees by appointing a specialist in the primary phase. Her leadership and programme design has had a significant impact on the current NQTs, whose completion rates and overall attainment have improved still further.
29. Employment rates for trainees are above national figures. A very small number of NQTs this year have chosen not to gain employment as teachers immediately, for personal or geographical reasons, or because they are able to complete a higher degree. All the former trainees are eminently suitable for careers in teaching and met the teachers' standards at a high level.

30. There is little variation in outcomes for different phases and routes. As numbers are small, differences in outcomes can stand out, so leaders wisely track the progress of trainees at an individual level. When leaders identify any variation through their quality assurance and assessment processes, they are quick to intervene and provide extra practical and theoretical support to ensure that all trainees succeed.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' and NQTs' teaching:

Bayards Hill Primary School, Oxford

Cheney School, Oxford

Dr South's Primary School, Islip

Gosford Hill School, Kidlington

Marcham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, Abingdon

New Marston Primary School, Oxford

St John the Evangelist Primary School, Oxford

St Nicholas' Primary School, Oxford

The Cherwell School, Oxford

The Oxford Academy, Oxford

Wood Farm Primary School, Oxford

Woodstock Church of England Primary School, Woodstock

ITE partnership details

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Previous inspection report	N/A
Provider address	The Cherwell OTSA SCITT The Cherwell School Marston Ferry Road Oxford OX2 7EE



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