

Billericay Educational Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

11–14 November 2013 and 11–12 February 2014

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty’s Inspectors in accordance with the *ITE Inspection Handbook*. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from January 2013.

The inspection draws upon evidence from 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 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

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The primary phase

Information about the primary partnership

- This school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) partnership works with 39 schools to provide initial teacher education (ITE) across the primary phase (ages 5 to 11 years). Thirty three base schools and six partner placement schools currently work with the SCITT. Trainees who successfully complete the one-year course are awarded a post-graduate certificate in education, validated by Anglia Ruskin University, and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).
- The SCITT draws upon a range of additional expertise from schools within the partnership, independent consultants and local authorities. Centre-based training takes place on the Chelmsford campus of Anglia Ruskin University.
- At the time of the inspection visits, there were 54 trainees of which 15 were following the School Direct route.

Information about the primary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited the partnership on two separate occasions. At the time of the first visit in November 2013 trainees were taking part in centre-based training. Consequently, inspectors were unable to observe their teaching but did observe newly qualified teachers (NQTs) teaching. Inspectors made a return visit in February 2014 to observe trainees teaching on their second school placement that enables them to gain experience of teaching pupils in a different key stage.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the providers' evaluations of how well it is performing; course handbooks; progress, completion and employment data; external examiner reports; and a sample of trainees' reflective log-books.
- Inspectors attended two centre-based training sessions and held meetings with senior leaders and professional tutors from the SCITT, professional tutors and a group of partnership representatives.
- Inspectors observed lessons taught by eight NQTs in six schools on their first inspection visit and eight trainees in five schools on their return visit in February 2014. On both inspection visits inspectors also met with school based mentors and headteachers.

Inspection team

David Edwards HMI
Philip Mann HMI

Lead inspector
Assistant lead inspector

Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the primary partnership are:

- trainees' very positive relationships with pupils that demonstrate their abilities to manage behaviour in lessons very well
- trainees who make excellent use of resources to enhance their teaching, including other adults in the classroom, and ensure pupils of all abilities make good or outstanding progress
- the highly effective use made of post-selection information to identify pre-course training needs for individuals that enables them to make a confident start to their training from the outset
- centre-based trainers who are expert in their field and with a proven track-record of working successfully in partnership schools
- the excellent quality assurance procedures that have been extended and further developed to ensure training is of the highest quality in all schools throughout the partnership
- the very high quality of personalised pastoral and academic support provided to all trainees which results in their outstanding progress and outcomes
- the very effective use of a personalised mentor sheet to record mentors' strengths and highlight areas for their improvement in order to secure consistent, high-quality feedback and support to trainees
- the high standard of partnership schools and personnel that play an influential role in the recruitment, selection and strategic direction of the SCITT.

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

The partnership should:

- ensure that all centre-based training, linked to the new National Curriculum from September 2014, focuses and exemplifies best practice in teaching and learning.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding

1. A sustained upward trend of high-quality outcomes since the previous inspection confirms trainees' performance is outstanding. The proportion of trainees whose attainment in relation to the Teachers' Standards is outstanding has increased over the previous three years and there are no significant differences in the outcomes achieved by different groups of trainees. The consistently high completion rates of trainees and the very high level of progression into employment have been sustained since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors found that trainees have a reputation within the local area of being highly competent and reflective practitioners who act quickly in response to advice and who therefore make rapid progress towards becoming good and outstanding teachers. In each of the last three years nearly all trainees have attained a good or better standard by the end of their training. The proportion of trainees who attain outstanding outcomes has increased in each of the last three years. Completion and employment rates are consistently high with one hundred per cent of NQTs securing a teaching post in 2013, and nearly all within the SCITT partnership.
3. Discussions with trainees, NQTs and mentors in schools confirm that, trainees, by the end of their training, possess a very secure knowledge and understanding of the principles of teaching. In particular they demonstrate a secure knowledge of and understanding about the 2014 programmes of study in English, mathematics, science, computing and religious education. Trainees make highly effective use of teaching aids, technology and support staff in their lessons to stimulate and engage pupils in exciting learning experiences. For example, through the carefully planned use of tablet computers to motivate and support a group of low-ability boys in a Year 2 class writing about 'a spooky house'.
4. Trainees were observed by inspectors to be making excellent progress towards attaining the Teachers' Standards. Similarly, the NQTs who were observed teaching continue to implement high standards in their work. For example, trainees are particularly well-informed and prepared to use strategies that secure pupils' progress and next steps in learning. By giving regular oral feedback and the accurate marking of pupils' books, trainees and NQTs provide pupils with useful guidance on ways to improve their work further.

5. NQTs demonstrate calm confidence in responding to and managing pupils' behaviour in lessons. They plan thoroughly and provide very well for the needs of more able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They are able to draw upon their high quality teaching experiences and the extensive range of behaviour management strategies learned during their training. Trainees also possess a very good knowledge and understanding of diversity and equalities issues which they use to inform their lesson planning. NQTs are especially confident in teaching mathematics and literacy skills. Mentors and headteachers praise the NQTs' high standards of professional conduct and this matches evidence gathered through observations and discussion.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding

6. All trainees who met with inspectors spoke very highly about the quality of training they have received centrally and in the many good and outstanding placement schools. This is confirmed by the extremely positive trainee survey results seen by inspectors in November 2013 and again in February 2014. There are very clear structures in place to ensure consistency of training in all partnership schools. High quality lesson observations, where trainees are accurately assessed against the Teachers' Standards, are a feature of the training. This ensures trainees understand how well they are progressing in developing their teaching skills. School staff who are identified as excellent at writing observations on trainees are invited to undertake joint observations to support mentors in other schools. Through highly effective target setting trainees know exactly what they need to work on to improve further and this often leads to their accelerated progress in performance in the classroom. Mentors use this high quality feedback to encourage trainees to think deeply about how they might improve their teaching and set targets for further development. As a result, most trainees make good and often rapid progress to become good or outstanding teachers.
7. Centre-based teaching effectively extends the critical thinking skills of trainees. Trainers are expert in their field and possess a proven track record of working in partnership schools with other education experts. Trainers make reference to trainees' experiences in the classroom and provide regular opportunities for trainees to reflect on how they might adapt their practice and apply their developing knowledge to their classroom practice. Teaching ensures trainees have regular opportunities to engage with each other through sharing ideas and in practical tasks, although opportunities are sometimes missed by tutors to use and exemplify the very best practices of primary teaching methodology in their training.
8. The level of coherence between the taught aspects of the course and school placements is excellent. The balance of high quality theoretical

learning and regular opportunities to practice newly acquired skills successfully builds on trainees' knowledge and accelerates the very good progress they make from the outset. This means all trainees are well supported to make rapid progress in becoming good and outstanding teachers. Assignments are marked effectively and trainees receive constructive feedback to help them improve further. Course and programme leaders have fully embraced the planned changes to the National Curriculum and have woven them into the training programme in order to fully prepare the trainees for 2014. Subject leaders ensure that trainees are taught to take a holistic view of the curriculum. For example, the link between spelling and handwriting is explored and emphasised by linking trainees' knowledge of spelling patterns to support the development of pupils' handwriting skills. Mentor feedback has led to the further development of handwriting and to the greater levels of consistency in teaching now seen across the partnership.

9. Reviews of the effectiveness of training are carried out in a culture of professional openness that successfully promotes and sustains excellence. Trainees' feedback is carefully analysed and used to improve training further. The partnership is highly effective in the use of technology to support the monitoring of trainees' progress and in gathering evidence against the Teachers' Standards. This provides the partnership with a rich source of information for its on-going self-evaluation.
10. Partnership schools point to the many additional benefits they gain from being involved in the training of new teachers, such as the high quality training of mentors. This also extends to enhancing the quality of teaching within schools generally. For example, by providing up-to-date subject expertise that ensures trainees are particularly well prepared to teach mathematics and systematic synthetic phonics. The trainees and NQTs that spoke to inspectors say that centre-based and school-based training to teach phonics is of high quality and ensures that all trainees are able to teach this important aspect of the curriculum with confidence, no matter which key stage they are working in. A regular opportunity for trainees to be involved in peer tutoring enables them to learn from one another's curriculum strengths and subject expertise. Consequently, school leaders confirm NQTs are usually able to make an immediate and very positive contribution in teaching and developing pupils' literacy skills when they take up their first posts.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding

11. The leadership team is ably supported by a very effective administration team who work calmly and closely with trainees, tutors and schools. Leadership at all levels continues to anticipate and respond to changes within education extremely well. The commitment and effectiveness to securing excellence ensured that the recommendation noted in the previous inspection report has been fully implemented. As a result, the continuing professional development for course trainers is now clearly linked to the success criteria of the partnership improvement plan. For example, tutors regularly attend national training conferences on subjects such as, equalities, diversity and safeguarding. Others provide subject specialism guidance to national expertise groups on curriculum developments.
12. The partnership continues to provide excellent individual support and pastoral guidance for trainees. Outcomes from the rigorous selection process result in a carefully tailored programme of pre-course work. Trainees' progress is recorded in their individual development plans and shared with their mentors in school. Trainees say the high expectations set at the outset prepare them very well for the start of their centre-based training. All relevant safeguarding and other statutory requirements and criteria are fully met.
13. A very strong sense of teamwork exists across the partnership as all those with a stake in its continuing success and expansion strive for further improvements. Schools are highly influential and involved, not just in the recruitment and selection of trainees but also in the strategic shaping and future direction of the partnership. A significant expansion has taken place recently with new schools joining the partnership. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the risks associated with expansion, yet they have successfully maintained continuity of provision and high outcomes for trainees. This is due to the excellent quality assurance procedures that are firmly embedded within the partnership and that quickly identify any weakness.
14. Communication throughout is excellent and supports the efficient running of the partnership. The rigorous interview process ensures only the very best candidates are selected for training and maintains the high standards expected from all successful candidates. In addition to an interview and written tests, candidates deliver a presentation based on a current educational issue, work with a small group of pupils and then teach a whole class. The process is designed not only to probe candidates' subject knowledge and communication skills but also to test their resilience, and ability to reflect on their practice.

15. Mentors say they particularly value the training they receive in making judgements on the quality of trainees' teaching. A very effective strategy embraced throughout the partnership schools is the use of a 'personalised mentor record-card'. This guides mentors and headteachers on how to deliver high quality feedback to trainees, following an observation. Significantly, the record card also highlights mentors' own strengths and weaknesses, and identifies targets for their improvement. This strategy provides management with a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the quality of mentoring across the partnership and allows the partnership to respond swiftly with additional training and support where needed.
16. In 2012 the SCITT relocated to new premises and now shares accommodation with a local university. This has brought a range of benefits. For example, regular joint assessment panels have been introduced to assess trainees' written assignments and trainees benefit from access to university resources, such as the library, when taking part in their centre-based training. Self-evaluation is accurate and robust. As a result of the flexible and rapid response demonstrated by the leadership team to the exceptionally detailed tracking and analysis of trainees' outcomes, the partnership is very well placed to continue to improve.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited in November 2013 to observe NQTs teaching:

Buttsbury Infant School, Billericay
Brightside Primary School, Billericay
Collingwood Primary School, South Woodham Ferrers
Ingrave Johnstone Primary School, Ingrave
Long Ridings Primary School, Brentwood
St Peter's C of E Primary School, Brentwood.

The following schools were visited in February 2014 to observe trainees teaching:

Elm Hall Primary School, Witham
Great Berry Primary School, Basildon
Ingatestone Infant School, Ingatestone
Ingatestone Junior School, Ingatestone
Our Lady Immaculate RC Primary School, Chelmsford

ITE partnership details

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Provider address

C/o Anglia Ruskin University
Room 204
Sawers Building
Bishop Hall Lane
Chelmsford
CM1 1SQ