

Mid Essex Initial Teacher Training Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 12–14 June 2017

Stage 2: 9–11 October 2017

This inspection was carried out by two of 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 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

| | 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 |

Information about the secondary partnership

- Mid Essex is a school-based initial teacher training (ITT) scheme. Trainees undertake most of their training within a local Essex school, with central training, at Notley High School, on Thursdays.
- After successfully completing the course, trainees are awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) and, usually, a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (ProfGCE).
- The partnership has been established for 20 years and includes 20 secondary schools around Essex.
- From September 2017, the partnership offers 60 places, across 16 different subjects.

Information about the secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching of 10 trainees, in five schools, during stage one of the inspection, and the teaching of seven newly qualified teachers (NQTs), in six schools, during stage two. At stage one, inspectors met with groups of trainees in schools, and in stage two, inspectors met with two groups of NQTs. They also met with mentors, trainers, partnership leaders and headteachers.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence, including trainees' files, course handbooks, development plans, data on trainees' progress, completion rates and employment rates of trainees, and evidence of the partnership's self-evaluation. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including information on recruitment and selection, statutory safeguarding and compliance with the initial teacher training criteria, tracking, assessment and summary reports, records of trainees' teaching, and evidence of how well trainees meet the teachers' standards.
- Inspectors took account of responses to recent NQT surveys and to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors took into account 11 responses to the trainee online questionnaire which trainees completed in 2017. Inspectors also reviewed the partnership's own evaluations of the programme by trainees.

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, Her Majesty's Inspector, lead inspector

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Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the secondary partnership are:

- The strongly self-reflective culture that is woven through the partnership, from leaders to trainees and NQTs, resulting in continually improving practice.
- The consistently high employment rates, resulting from trainees from the partnership being keenly sought by local schools.
- The high quality of training and assessment provided for trainees, reflected in shaping confident classroom practitioners who are ready, as one headteacher put it, 'to enter the profession as naturally inquisitive and reflective teachers'.
- The trainees' and NQTs' effective management of pupils' behaviour, together with the professional conduct of trainees.
- The strategic leadership provided by local headteachers, which ensures that the programme meets the needs of local schools. The partnership's day-to-day leadership and administration are highly effective and efficient. Leaders are constantly seeking to improve on already strong practice.
- The range of expert mentors and other staff who observe and advise trainees and to whom trainees can refer if they have concerns, or need clarification or advice.
- The regular and extremely well-regarded communications, meetings and highly effective quality assurance of training, mentoring and assessment.
- The excellent pastoral support for trainees, which ensures that they complete the course and flourish as newly qualified teachers.

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

The partnership should:

- ensure that the recently improved arrangements for the second school experience of the very small number of salaried trainees have the required impact in bringing training for these trainees up to the excellent standard of the rest.

Inspection judgements

1. Headteachers of local schools regard the quality of trainees and NQTs as being very high. As a result, schools are eager to host them for training placements

and to employ them. Most of the NQTs are employed in schools in which they did at least some of their training. All of last year's trainees are now NQTs in schools in the East of England. Headteachers spoke of the need to 'snap up' trainees before somebody else did. The provider has judged the majority of trainees to be outstanding in relation to what could reasonably be expected of a trainee teacher at the end of their training. Throughout both stages of the inspection, inspectors agreed with the provider's judgements of trainees. The assessment of trainees is rigorous and robust. There are no variations in the outcomes of different groups of trainees. The partnership is highly effective in training teachers to meet the needs of local schools.

2. Inspectors observed NQTs who are very confident practitioners. Pupils' books and trainees' records demonstrate trainees' positive impact on pupils' progress during the training year, and NQTs demonstrate their positive impact on pupils' progress. By the end of the training, all trainees at least meet the teachers' standards and all are particularly strong in part two of the standards, which are concerned with professional behaviour.
3. Trainees are very positive regarding the quality of their training for behaviour management. The clear impact of their training was seen in the teaching and the effective behaviour management of trainees and NQTs. Classroom management was consistently a strength of those observed. Trainees and NQTs challenged and checked pupils' behaviour with quiet confidence, usually referring to the schools' behaviour systems.
4. NQTs are quick to recognise when pupils are in need of help with their work. They intervene to good effect and move pupils on in a timely way. NQTs often successfully apply the strategies learned in their training and seek to apply them in lessons. For example, in an English lesson, one NQT made very effective use of knowledge about how the brain works to develop inventive and creative activities. One representative NQT commented on how the training gave him the 'chance to gather techniques and strategies that are invaluable'.
5. Inspectors noted the ease with which trainees and NQTs have developed a very positive learning ethos in their lessons. As a result, pupils respond eagerly and work cooperatively and well in classes.
6. Their training has helped NQTs develop into confident and ambitious professionals. They are often creative in their teaching, planning learning that sparks pupils' interest. For example, one NQT presented complex and sensitive ideas, such as presenting a lesson on communicable diseases in a way that pupils understood and were comfortable with. Pupils in several classes told inspectors about how much they enjoy learning in NQTs' lessons, often referring to the creativity of the task and the clarity of explanations.

7. Trainees and NQTs are very alert to the need to take into account the different starting points of pupils when planning learning. As an NQT told an inspector, 'I know how to take account of the differences pupils have when I am planning.' NQTs are usually adept at meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able pupils. They promote pupils' literacy well through their teaching. For example, in a low-ability English class, technical language was used well by pupils as a result of the NQT's teaching.
8. All of the NQTs spoken with are alert to, and able to give examples of, possible barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Almost all demonstrated how they overcome them, and this is a strong feature of the effective training trainees receive. One NQT spoke persuasively of how to help disadvantaged pupils overcome aspects of social or emotional deprivation in English, using biographies to inspire pupils and encourage them to read.
9. Very good subject knowledge featured strongly across each of the trainees and NQTs visited. Some trainees came in with this, and say that they were shown how to use their knowledge with pupils through the subject-specific training. Leaders have directed resources to ensure that even where there are very small numbers of trainees for a subject, they still receive effective subject specialist training. This is highly valued by trainees. Not all trainers encourage trainees to join subject associations, which, especially in small subject departments, are valuable organisations for maintaining subject knowledge and professional development when trainees become teachers. Where trainees did not have high levels of subject-specific knowledge for their teaching role, subject knowledge enhancement has been effective in helping trainees to prepare for their new posts. Where NQTs are teaching outside of their specialist subject, headteachers say that trainees from the partnership are resilient and well prepared to do so.
10. The structure of the training enables trainees to build up their skills very quickly and effectively. The partnership has a highly effective range of expert mentors and other staff who observe and advise trainees and to whom trainees can refer if they have concerns, or need clarification or advice. Training extends beyond subject mentors in school to 'sub-mentors', who are other teachers in the school whose classes the trainees may teach and who in turn help to train and coach the trainee.
11. There is a high level of consistency in the quality of training and quality of placements across the partnership. This is the result of the highly effective quality assurance of training, mentoring and assessment. The arrangements and communications for the contrasting school placements are highly effective for non-salaried trainees. Leaders have recognised that in the last academic year, the small number of trainees being paid a salary experienced their contrasting school placement too late in their training to maximise its impact.

For current trainees, the contrasting placement is scheduled at the same time for all trainees. This is an example of reflective and proactive operational leadership of the partnership, which is constantly seeking to improve upon already strong practice.

12. Trainees are extremely positive about central professional studies and subject training. They say that they can apply strategies developed in this training directly in the classroom. They value hearing directly from serving practitioners. In the anonymous Ofsted online questionnaire, respondents were unanimously positive and confident about all aspects of their training, except for promoting pupils' mathematical abilities in subjects other than mathematics. Even for this aspect, the positive responses were above the national average.
13. Target-setting against each element of the teachers' standards is used very effectively across the partnership to ensure trainees' rapid progress. Evidence of NQTs responding positively to the targets given in their transfer documentation was seen in lessons. For example, in a religious studies lesson, the NQT carefully planned for pupils of different abilities to choose to tackle tasks in different ways. She was responding very well to a target to plan to meet the needs of different ability groups. Similarly, an English NQT had been given a target to improve assessment. Pupils' books and her interaction with pupils in class, including effective individual feedback, demonstrated strength in this area.
14. School leaders, school-based trainers and trainees are very positive about the regular communication they receive from the centre. All these groups were anxious to commend the excellent administration. One headteacher explained that if anyone expressed an interest in teaching, he would refer them to the partnership's administration, confident that they would immediately be given information and guidance.
15. Headteachers value what some described as 'the privilege' of being able to contribute to the strategic direction of the partnership. One headteacher explained that partnership working is highly effective. For example, he cited the problem of an NQT at his school whose mentor became ill in term three of their training. An alternative mentor was immediately identified. This triggered a very quick visit from the central subject tutor, to ensure that the trainee's support and quality of provision remained high. The new mentor received individual training to bring her up to speed.
16. Trainees and NQTs are extremely positive about the support they received while training and continue to receive as NQTs. Trainees who have completed the course with the lowest grades receive additional support even when they are in another NQT development programme. 'Mid Essex is doing all they can to support me,' commented an NQT, while another told inspectors that they made it clear that support would continue throughout the year.

17. School leaders, trainers, trainees and NQTs are extremely appreciative of the highly supportive central team. A headteacher volunteered that the central staff provide excellent pastoral support, saying, 'They really know and care for the trainees while maintaining rigorous standards.'
18. Leaders and managers are willing to challenge schools in the best interests of trainees, for example in securing changes to the salaried trainees' second placement time, to increase the impact of the placement on accelerating trainees' progress. Leaders and managers also work with schools to meet their needs. One headteacher commented that he was 'impressed by the response and willingness to challenge' of partnership leaders.
19. Leaders carefully analyse patterns and trends in order to build on already very effective provision. For example, they noticed that two years ago there was a small number of trainees failing to complete the course that year. In response to their analysis of the individual reasons for this, leaders decided to enhance their already strong pastoral provision by adding funding for in-school counselling for trainees who may require it. Leaders also added additional content on resilience to the questions prospective candidates are asked at interview for the 2016/17 cohort. They also included an additional question around preparedness for the challenges of teaching. This allows staff to open supportive discussions early on with candidates around the kinds of issues they may find difficult. Inspectors found several examples of trainees completing the course due to the excellent pastoral support they have received.
20. Leaders have made sure that there have been effective responses to the issues raised at stage one of the inspection. Leaders have a very good overview of the programme's effectiveness and a proven track record of taking decisive and effective action to improve it. The inspection found nothing that leaders were not already acting on. This demonstrates a strong capacity to improve further.
21. The partnership uses schools that provide trainees with a range of social and educational contexts. This prepares trainees well to teach in schools with pupils from differing socio-economic backgrounds. However, the partnership's locality limits the level of diversity available. Additionally, in the past, trainees have been placed in schools with different levels of overall effectiveness. This remains the case, but as the overall effectiveness of Essex secondary schools has improved, so training opportunities are becoming more restricted to schools that are at least good – a happy dilemma.
22. The partnership has taken very seriously all requirements to check trainees' qualifications and their suitability to work with children, in line with current requirements. All statutory requirements and ITT criteria are met.

Annex: Partnership schools

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

Alec Hunter Academy, Braintree

Brentwood County High School, Brentwood

Chelmer Valley High School, Chelmsford

Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form College, Braintree

Ormiston Academy, Sudbury

Plume School, Maldon

Ramsey Academy, Halstead

Stowmarket High School, Stowmarket

ITE partnership details

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| Lead inspector | Adrian Lyons HMI |
| Type of ITE partnership | SCITT |
| Phases provided | Secondary |
| Date of previous inspection | 28 June 2010 |
| Previous inspection report | https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70086 |
| Provider address | Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form Notley Road Braintree CM7 1WY |



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