

Buckingham Partnership

Unit A, Bourton Business Park, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 7DS

Inspection dates

27 February to 2 March 2023

Inspection judgements

Primary and secondary age-phase combined

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education and training

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to be a trainee at this ITE provider?

Trainees are more than ready to enter the teaching profession by the end of the year. They are well versed in up-to-date thinking about how pupils learn best, with a good grounding in the subjects they teach. Leaders' commitment to trainees' success is mirrored in teaching them how to get past their own frustrations when pupils have not grasped learning and to consider why. Trainees realise the limitations of working memory and the importance of checking what pupils have retained long term. They understand the particular value of breaking learning down to meet pupils' additional needs.

Trainees' immersion in evidence-based practice during the early intensive focus on behaviour management has paid dividends. Trainees are competent and confident in classroom management. Timely safeguarding training goes over and above minimum requirements. Trainees are mindful of their responsibilities for pupils' well-being as a prerequisite for learning and are familiar with processes for reporting concerns.

School mentors are the gatekeepers of trainees' lived experience and models of professional behaviours. Trainees hone their practice under mentors' watchful eyes and learn from them and other experienced colleagues. Partnership leaders work vigilantly with mentors to track trainees' progress. They quickly pick up anyone who is not keeping up for whatever reason, supporting and challenging them to get back on track. Trainees are open to this additional support. Leaders have cultivated an ethos where it is okay to put your head above the parapet and say if you need help.

Information about this ITE provider

- The partnership is in its tenth year of operation.
- It offers postgraduate routes to qualified teacher status in both the primary and secondary age phases. Trainees follow either the core, School Direct or School Direct (salaried) route, studying either full time over one year or part time over two years. Most take the opportunity to study for a postgraduate certificate in education with the University of Bath Spa as well.
- There were 36 trainees at the time of the inspection. Thirteen were training to teach five to 11 years and one three to seven years. All secondary trainees were training to teach 11 to 18 years. There are also a handful of assessment-only trainees each term.
- The provider works with maintained and independent schools across Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and West Northamptonshire.
- Most of the partner schools were graded good or outstanding at their last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two of His Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector.
- Inspectors met with the director, lead mentors, the operations manager and the administrator. The lead inspector also met with the headteacher of the lead school in their role as accounting officer and the governor from the lead school who has oversight of the partnership's work.
- The inspection team conducted focused reviews in early reading and languages in the primary phase and physical education, history and psychology in the secondary phase. As part of the reviews, they met with subject champions and visited six schools, plus conducting one remote visit. During these visits, inspectors met with 10 trainees and six early career teachers as well as mentors, professional tutors and headteachers.
- Inspectors also met either face to face or online with a further 15 trainees, as well as groups of mentors, professional tutors and subject champions.
- Over the course of the inspection, the team reviewed a range of the provider's documents and information on the website, as well as responses to the trainee and staff surveys.

What does the ITE provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders deliberately and methodically build and deepen trainees' learning over the successive stages of the course, weaving in the requirements of the core content framework (CCF). Central training, school experience and study each play their part. A systematic flow of information means all parties are clear about the focus of learning at any given point. Leaders' due diligence in selecting trainers and, in turn, schools' choice of mentors means that as a rule, trainees are learning from the best. School mentors are not though, as leaders are well aware, as familiar with the research that underpins the CCF as trainees are.

Trainees build a good bank of knowledge of well-respected pedagogical research and thinking through what the partnership calls the 'main' curriculum. Leaders have designed a comprehensive assessment framework to check that trainees are learning, understanding and able to apply what they are taught at each stage. Experienced trainers move systematically from teaching about a topic to guiding trainees to apply the learning to their own practice. School mentors know to signpost trainees to observe experienced colleagues and let them practise and reflect to develop their knowledge and practice. However, they have not been trained to deconstruct and critique trainees' learning at a more sophisticated level.

There are notable strengths in the subject dimension of the curriculum, particularly where there are experts on hand either in the core team or within schools in the partnership. These subject champions have a clear rationale for the curriculum content, rooting it in what trainees need to learn to be well prepared to teach the subject. Primary trainees, for example, are well prepared to teach early reading. They understand why a systematic approach to teaching phonics is best for all pupils and the importance of ongoing assessment to identify and support any who are struggling to keep up.

Elsewhere, leaders are still fine-tuning some specific content and the alignment between centre- and school-based training. They have sourced subject experts, reviewed time allocations and determined overviews of content, including the blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning and study. However, sometimes leaders' decisions do not focus explicitly enough on what they want trainees to know and understand about the subject and how pupils learn it. Across subjects, assessment of trainees' knowledge is not as forensic as it is for the pedagogical content.

Accountability is strong at all levels. Professional tutors in schools are pivotal in ensuring trainees have valuable experiences. They are a useful sounding board for future developments. The core team maintains close oversight of schools' work and trainees' progress. They work well together to ensure quality and consistency and to keep the programme under constant review, considering stakeholders' feedback and sector developments. Collectively, the partnership team ensures that as trainees move into their early career they and their school are fully cognisant of their strengths and professional development needs.

What does the ITE provider need to do to improve the primary and secondary combined phase?

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- The subject dimension of the curriculum is not as meticulously thought through as the pedagogical content. In some subjects, the focus on what trainees need to learn and the alignment between their centre- and school-based learning is not as specific as it could be. Leaders should build on their work to enrich the curriculum by clearly defining the subject pedagogy trainees need to acquire and be assessed against.
- Mentoring is not consistently as precise as it needs to be. There are some inconsistencies in the advice trainees receive about what is best practice. Leaders should

implement their plans to enhance mentoring by ensuring that all school-based staff are fully conversant with the underpinning research and structured process for developing trainees' practice as set out in the CCF.

Does the ITE provider's primary and secondary combined phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?

- The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70285
Inspection number	10258791

This inspection was carried out in accordance with the 'Initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook'.

This framework and handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2020.

Type of ITE provider	School-centred initial teacher training
Phases provided	Primary and secondary combined
Date of previous inspection	1 July and 9 December 2015

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, Lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gary Holden	Ofsted Inspector
James Broadbridge	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Buckingham School	110484	Secondary
Heyford Park School	148353	Primary
Padbury Church of England School	145216	Primary
Royal Latin School	137344	Secondary
Stowe School	110548	Secondary
Winslow Church of England School	110449	Primary

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