

Associated Merseyside Partnership SCITT

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 12 June 2017 Stage 2: 13 November 2017

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) 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 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

- The Associated Merseyside Partnership school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) began in September 2015. It forms part of the Lydiate Learning Trust, with Deyes High School as lead school in the partnership for the secondary phase. There is currently no lead school for the primary phase.
- Within the partnership, there are 13 secondary schools across four local authorities, and 12 primary schools all within the same local authority. In addition, there are two all-through schools catering for pupils in the three-to-19 age range across two local authorities. One of these is a special school which meets the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The partnership offers a one-year School Direct training programme which, on successful completion, leads to qualified teacher status (QTS) and a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). The PGCE is validated by Liverpool Hope University. Trainees can choose to train in the primary (ages seven to 11) or secondary (ages 11 to 16 or 14 to 19) phase.
- The primary training programme enables trainees to follow a core primary route or to train as a physical education (PE) specialist.
- Secondary trainees specialise in a range of subjects at key stage 3 and key stage 4. This range includes English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, history, geography, modern foreign languages, design and technology, PE, performing arts and religious education. Business studies is available in key stage 4 and key stage 5. Secondary trainees have the opportunity for post-16 enhancement in their subject specialism.
- During 2016/17, the SCITT trained 33 trainees on the secondary route and seven trainees on the primary route.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited six schools at stage 1 and observed eight trainees teaching in the primary and secondary phases. They spoke to headteachers, mentors and trainees during these visits. Inspectors also met with other trainees who had not been observed, trainers, the link tutor from Liverpool Hope University and representatives of the SCITT's quality assurance team. Discussions were held with SCITT leaders and members of the executive board. Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the trainee online questionnaire received in the summer term 2017.
- During stage 2, inspectors visited eight schools and observed 11 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) teaching. They spoke to headteachers, mentors, induction tutors and former trainees when they visited schools. Meetings were held with SCITT leaders and members of the executive board. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with NQTs not observed at either stage 1 or stage 2 and met with some of the 2017/18 cohort of primary and secondary trainees.

- In both stages of the inspection, inspectors evaluated a range of evidence including trainees' files and work in pupils' books. They also scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the partnership, including information on trainees' attainment, employment and completion. Inspectors considered the partnership's self-evaluation and reviewed its website.
- Inspectors checked that the partnership was compliant with safeguarding and other statutory requirements, including the ITT criteria.

Inspection team

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Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

Key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership

- SCITT leaders relentlessly pursue their vision to provide a continuous supply of highly skilled teachers for schools in the partnership and across the North West.
- Recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous and fully involve partnership schools in this process. This ensures that only the most suitable, high-calibre trainees are selected for a place on the training programme.
- Trainees and NQTs are highly committed to a teaching career and demonstrate a strong aptitude to make a positive difference to the lives of pupils in partnership schools and beyond.
- Trainees' strong attainment against the teachers' standards reflects the good quality of training and support that they receive. Leaders in employing schools are particularly impressed by the exceptionally high levels of personal and professional conduct demonstrated by NQTs.
- Employment and completion rates for primary and secondary trainees are above average. About a third of trainees successfully secure teaching posts in partnership schools because headteachers are impressed by, and are confident in, the quality of the partnership's training. The partnership has a growing reputation in the North West.
- Strong written and verbal communication between SCITT leaders, headteachers, mentors and trainees ensures that all understand the partnership's vision for excellence. Leaders take swift action to tackle any rare problems that occur.
- An exceptional level of pastoral care is provided for trainees. This quality support contributes significantly towards the high completion rates. Trainees and NQTs have positive views of their training. They would recommend the SCITT to others.

- Leaders demonstrate capacity to improve the partnership further. They are reflective and know the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership well. Appropriate actions have been taken in response to the areas for improvement identified at stage 1 of the inspection. As a result, the partnership is building on strengths and improving rapidly.

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

The partnership should:

- strengthen training further so that trainees across both phases have a deeper understanding of:
 - how well pupils learn and what good progress looks like
 - the causes of underachievement and what to do about this for all groups of pupils, but particularly for those pupils who are disadvantaged
- use the improved quality assurance processes to ensure that:
 - all mentors' work is consistently of the same high standard
 - feedback given to trainees has a sharp focus on the teachers' standards
- enhance leadership and management further by using the refined monitoring systems to:
 - check for any gaps in the range of trainees' experiences and act quickly to fill these during training
 - identify weaknesses in aspects of the teachers' standards and link these more closely with training and development needs, particularly for primary trainees.

Inspection judgements

1. The Associated Merseyside Partnership is building successfully on previous strengths and is improving rapidly. This is because leaders, including the executive board, are outward-looking. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well and they take swift action to tackle areas that fall short of their high expectations.
2. Trainees' attainment against the teachers' standards is high and has improved over the first two years since the SCITT opened. In 2015/16, about half of the trainees were assessed as consistently demonstrating outstanding teaching practice. In 2016/17, this improved to about two thirds. No trainees last year were less than good by the time they completed their training programme.
3. Since the partnership opened, outcomes for secondary trainees have been consistently stronger than those of primary trainees. Typically at least two thirds of secondary trainees are assessed as outstanding, compared with less than half of primary trainees.

4. All trainees share leaders' commitment to improvement. Trainees' accurate reflections on their practice ensure that they know which aspects of their teaching require further work and, ably supported by most mentors, they strive to tackle these weaknesses. All trainees play a full and active part in school life. Many lead clubs and volunteer to take part in enrichment activities. They willingly share resources with others in school and with fellow trainees. All trainees demonstrate exceptionally high standards of personal and professional conduct.
5. Good-quality training prepares trainees and NQTs well to teach. Trainees have high expectations of the standards for pupils' behaviour. They manage behaviour well and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of positive relationships with their pupils.
6. Key to the high attainment of trainees is making sure that only the best and most suitable applicants for a training place are accepted onto the training programme. Recruitment and selection procedures are extremely rigorous. This includes a technical interview to assess subject knowledge, a presentation and a 'mini-lesson'.
7. Leaders from partnership schools are fully involved in the recruitment and selection process. They look out for particular aptitudes that will enable trainees to be successful, for example trainees' ability to demonstrate resilience and a commitment to improving their skills, together with a passion for their subject or phase.
8. The combination of recruiting the right trainees to the course with good-quality training and exceptionally strong pastoral care leads to high completion and employment rates, which are above the national average. Since the partnership opened, all primary and secondary trainees have completed the training programmes and have been recommended for QTS. No significant differences exist between different groups of trainees in terms of their attainment, completion or employment rates.
9. Trainees receive guidance from SCITT leaders in how to write a good-quality job application and prepare for an interview. Employing headteachers told inspectors that trainees were exceptionally well prepared for interview and presented themselves well, as a result of this support.
10. Leaders in partnership schools, mentors and trainees all acknowledge the strong communication within the partnership and the high quality of support provided by SCITT leaders. Leaders respond quickly to concerns expressed from trainees, or partnership schools when trainees are placed with them. Changes are made to placements if necessary, to ensure that trainees have the best chance of success.
11. SCITT leaders train mentors to help them to carry out their role successfully. Expectations for this role are made clear when potential mentors apply for this responsibility. Some degree of consistency in the quality of mentors' work is

achieved through the use of common templates and documentation used across all schools in the partnership. However, the quality of information recorded is not always of the same high standard across the partnership. For example, on some lesson observation forms, imprecise feedback means it is difficult to determine what subject or concepts are taught.

12. Mentors' expectations of the quality and quantity of evidence that trainees present in their training files vary. Some primary and secondary trainees are unclear how to demonstrate that they exceed the minimum requirements for the teachers' standards. Not all mentors and trainees have a deep enough understanding of how to evidence pupils' learning or how to demonstrate that pupils make good progress. SCITT leaders have provided additional training and further guidance documentation for mentors and trainees, with the aim of improving consistency. It is too soon to see the impact of these changes.
13. Overall, the assessment of trainees is accurate. Where inconsistencies occur, these are challenged by SCITT leaders. Consequently, when leaders recommend awards for QTS, their assessments are nearly always accurate. However, inspectors disagreed with a very small number of assessments on the borderline of grades 1 and 2, which were overgenerous.
14. Most trainees have positive views of mentors' support in placement schools. However, the quality of some of the verbal and written feedback given to trainees following lesson observations is inconsistent. On occasions, feedback does not focus sharply enough on the teachers' standards or on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Sometimes comments are imprecise about differences in progress for different groups of pupils. Action has already been taken with the aim of adding greater rigour to quality assurance procedures. The partnership has begun to carry out further checks on the work of mentors through an extended pool of quality assurance assessors working with the partnership. However, as this work has only very recently started, there was very limited evidence of impact at the time of the inspection
15. Overall, training supports trainees well in developing their subject and curriculum knowledge and phase expertise. Coherence in training for primary and secondary trainees is achieved through the Masters programme delivered by Hope University. In response to feedback from trainees, changes have been made to the programme. For example, the assignment on assessment has been brought forwards in the 2017/18 programme to ensure that trainees develop a deeper theoretical understanding of assessment before their first placement. This is to ensure that trainees can apply their learning to their practice.
16. Mentors in schools, and 'expert practitioners' working across the partnership, support the development of subject and pedagogical knowledge. For example, secondary science trainees can attend a series of 12 sessions to enhance their physics subject knowledge. Primary trainees work with specialist secondary PE

teachers to develop their understanding of planning to meet pupils' needs across a range of areas. Overall, primary trainees are well prepared to teach across the breadth of the primary curriculum.

17. The partnership includes a range of different types of schools across the primary and secondary phases. This includes some judged by Ofsted as requires improvement, faith schools, a special school and some with nursery or post-16 provision. SCITT leaders intend to widen the range of schools available for trainees to broaden their experience of working with pupils in challenging socio-economic circumstances and pupils who come from differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
18. Leaders try to make sure that trainees experience two contrasting placements. Sometimes trainees are unclear how they would plan differently to meet the needs of their pupils in these two 'contrasting' placements. For example, in a faith school, trainees felt the only difference was planning time in the lesson for prayers rather than considering the differing needs of pupils.
19. A very small number of trainees do not currently have equal opportunity to a range of experiences. This limits their knowledge and understanding of progression from the previous key stage and on to the next one after the age range covered by their training. For example, at stage 1 of this inspection, not all primary trainees had the opportunity to plan and deliver a sequence of lessons for Year 6, and some had little understanding of how to teach early reading. Plans to improve primary trainees' understanding of early reading are now in place. Similarly, for secondary trainees, not all had the opportunity to plan and deliver lessons for sixth form in their subject specialism. The range of experiences is now being monitored far more closely by SCITT leaders, who have built in an enrichment week to the programme to fill any gaps identified through their tracking.
20. At stage 1 of the inspection, trainees were found not to have a clear enough understanding of the barriers to learning experienced by disadvantaged pupils, and how to plan and adapt teaching to remove these barriers. Training has now improved and changes have been made to the programme in response to this shortcoming. Consequently, trainees are developing a deeper understanding, sooner, of the causes of underachievement often experienced by this group of pupils. However, it is too soon to identify if trainees' planning and teaching is improving progress for the disadvantaged pupils they teach.
21. All trainees understand the importance of modelling correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Trainees focus on developing pupils' literacy skills through their marking of pupils' work and aim to develop pupils' oracy skills through encouraging pupils to explain their answers to questions in lessons.

22. Primary trainees and NQTs teach mathematics with increasing confidence. They use published resources well to support a 'mastery' approach. As a result, trainees' skills in teaching mathematics continue to improve.
23. NQTs from the Associated Merseyside Partnership are highly regarded by headteachers in the partnership and other schools in the North West. The reputation of the partnership is growing.
24. About a third of trainees successfully gain teaching appointments in schools in the partnership and many others in schools in the North West. Information is provided to employing headteachers in good time before the NQT commences employment. Headteachers say this is of high quality, although quite lengthy. Targets set are accurate because they are written in collaboration with the trainee at the end of their training. These provide a useful starting point to enable leaders to set initial targets for induction and to plan training and development needs. This strongly supports continuous professional development from training through to induction.
25. Trainees highly recommend the School Direct training route into teaching; a view confirmed by employing headteachers who recognise the quality of the training from this SCITT in particular. Trainees appreciate the 'hands-on' nature of the training programme with gradually increasing contact time with their classes. By the end of their training, trainees have completed far in excess of the minimum requirement for the number of days of school experience. They say their pupils do not realise they are trainees and pupils treat trainees like permanent teachers.
26. NQTs very quickly establish themselves in their schools. They readily take ownership of their own classrooms and create welcoming and supportive learning environments. They seize the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities to demonstrate their talents. Several former trainees are already successfully demonstrating skills in leadership roles in their schools.
27. Trainees and NQTs play a full and active role as a teacher in schools. Many have their own form, or tutor group, and teach personal, social and health education. Some trainees commented that they would have liked more training on how to teach aspects of this course to prepare them better for this pastoral role.
28. Trainees and NQTs have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and know how to make a referral if they have concerns about a pupil. Trainees complete training in looking out for the early signs of extremism or radical views through the partnership.
29. A wide range of other safeguarding issues are covered, such as awareness of bullying and the safe use of technology and social media, through weekly training sessions. This ensures that trainees and NQTs have a robust understanding of their responsibility to keep pupils safe.

30. The weekly training programme includes guidance on important themes such as managing behaviour and supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Trainees are able to request a placement or enrichment experience in a special school, a maintained school with a specialist unit, such as for pupils who have autism, or a pupil referral unit. They are therefore able to put their training into practice when working with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
31. SCITT leaders have a clear vision to improve the quality of teaching in schools in the partnership and in the North West, through providing a continuous supply of well-trained and highly committed NQTs for schools. The partnership is well led and managed. The timely response to the emerging areas for improvement at the end of stage 1 of the inspection indicates that leaders have capacity to improve the partnership further.
32. Leaders, including members of the executive board, consistently model high expectations and strong ambition for the partnership. The partnership agreement, signed by all schools, makes clear the expectations of everyone who is part of the partnership.
33. The executive board holds SCITT leaders to account. However, some systems are not used well enough to identify patterns or trends that might indicate gaps in training or inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring. Systems have been further refined. However, it is too soon to see how well members of the executive board use this information to inform improvement priorities.
34. Leaders are fully committed to keeping pace with local and national developments such as tackling teachers' workload. Mentors have recently completed a self-assessment of their skills against the new ITT mentor standards. This is a very new development but leaders aim to use this information to plan future training and development needs to enable mentors to gain national accreditation.

Annex: Partnership schools

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

Chesterfield High School, Crosby

Deyes High School, Maghull

Formby High School, Formby

Freshfield Primary School, Formby

Green Park Primary School, Maghull

Hudson Primary School, Maghull

Maghull High School, Maghull

Northcote Primary School, Walton

Northway Primary School, Maghull

Ormskirk High School, Ormskirk

Saint Peter and Paul Catholic College, Halton

Shoreside Primary School, Southport

St Thomas CofE Primary School, Lydiate

West Vale Primary School, Kirkby

ITE partnership details

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Lead inspector	Denah Jones
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Provider address	Deyes High School Deyes Lane Maghull Merseyside L31 6DE



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