

Star Teachers SCITT ITE Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 10 June 2019 Stage 2: 7 October 2019

This inspection was carried out by 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 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 Star Teachers school-centred partnership for initial teacher training (SCITT) provides primary and secondary teacher training for graduates. Trainees are trained to teach in either the 5–11 or 11–16 age range.
- Trainees who successfully complete their training are recommended for qualified teacher status (QTS). Most trainees also gain a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) from Manchester Metropolitan University during their training year.
- The SCITT has provided initial teacher training (ITT) since September 2017. The partnership was inspected for the first time at the end of its second year as an accredited provider.
- As well as providing PGCE routes into teaching, the SCITT offers an assessment-only route to QTS.
- From September 2019, the provider has expanded its provision and now offers a postgraduate teaching apprenticeship as a different route into the profession.
- During 2018/19, the partnership trained 38 trainees. Nine trainees were trained to teach in primary schools. Twenty-nine trainees were trained to teach in secondary schools.
- At the time of the inspection, the partnership offered the following specialisms for secondary trainees: biology, chemistry, English, history, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages.
- Within the partnership, there are 21 primary schools and 14 secondary schools. These schools are in eight different local authorities. Some of these schools are part of Star Academies, which is a multi-academy trust (MAT).
- Trainee teachers complete their placements in two contrasting schools. They also have enrichment experiences to enhance their understanding of how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Successful trainees are awarded QTS.
- The Star Teachers SCITT is part of the Star Institute, which oversees all aspects of training for teachers within Star Academies.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited seven schools at stage 1 of the inspection, observing 10 trainees teach. Inspectors reviewed trainees' teaching and standards files, subject knowledge audits, tasks and assignments.
- Inspectors held meetings with trainees, subject and professional mentors, headteachers, leaders and managers, trainers, members of the SCITT's strategic board and representatives of the MAT.

- Inspectors checked that the partnership was compliant with safeguarding and other statutory requirements, including the ITT criteria. They also reviewed a range of evidence provided by the partnership. This comprised: self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, employment and completion rates, recruitment and selection materials, trainee tracking documents, the partnership agreement, the SCITT handbook, the content of the professional studies programmes, trainees' assignments and their assessment information.
- During stage 2 of the inspection, inspectors visited seven schools and observed eight newly qualified teachers (NQTs). They met with NQTs, NQTs' mentors and senior leaders from partner schools. They considered the key actions taken by leaders and managers to improve the quality of training and outcomes between the two stages of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the trainee online questionnaire received in the summer term 2019.

Inspection team

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Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

Key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership

- The work of the partnership is underpinned by moral conviction. Leaders are relentless in their determination to develop first-class teachers who can ensure that pupils, irrespective of their background, benefit from a high-quality education.
- Leaders have ensured that the SCITT makes an extremely valuable contribution to helping under-represented groups join the teaching workforce.
- Leaders have embraced the government's vision to recruit trainees based on their potential to train rather than their readiness to teach.
- Leaders ensure that all trainees benefit from compassionate, personalised support. Trainees greatly value the consideration that is shown for their well-being.
- Trainees benefit from an exceptionally well-planned training programme. Leaders design the centre-based curriculum thoughtfully so that trainees' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed systematically. The programme helps trainees to develop a sound theoretical understanding of teaching in their relevant phase or subject specialism.
- Trainees develop strong subject knowledge. They have a clear understanding of what effective teaching looks like in the subjects that they teach. School leaders

within the partnership and beyond appreciate this. They describe Star Teachers SCITT trainees as being academic and scholarly.

- Trainees have exceptionally high expectations of themselves and the pupils that they teach. They are thoroughly professional in their conduct and are keen to immerse themselves fully in the broader life of their schools.
- Outcomes for trainees are excellent. A high proportion of trainees attain the very highest standards during their training, including against the teachers' standards. Trainees are ready to excel as teachers by the end of their training. Every effort is made to help trainees who require additional support. This ensures that all groups of trainees achieve well.
- Leaders understand that their work is not done at the end of the training year. Support for trainees as they become NQTs is exemplary. This enables trainees to become teachers who are a force for improvement in schools within Star Academies and beyond.

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

The partnership should:

- further develop trainees' preparedness to teach by maximising their development on both main placements
- further improve trainees' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum so they are able to sequence pupils' learning effectively over time
- further reduce variation in the effectiveness of mentoring by ensuring that trainees are consistently set ambitious targets for improving their teaching.

Inspection judgements

1. This is a partnership where people matter. As the SCITT and MAT grow, leaders have not lost sight of the importance of every trainee and each pupil that they teach.
2. Leaders are successful in their efforts to develop teachers who are a force for improvement in schools within the MAT and beyond.
3. Leaders have a clear vision for the role that the SCITT plays within the MAT and the wider educational landscape. Leaders see the SCITT as one branch of the Star Institute's work to develop first-class teachers and leaders.
4. Leaders are passionate and driven. They have skilfully overseen the ongoing development of the SCITT. They share a balanced and nuanced understanding of the partnership's strengths and know how further improvement can be secured.

5. The actions that leaders have taken to develop the partnership are ambitious and have led to demonstrable improvement. This reflects the striking capacity that leaders have to secure further improvement.
6. Leaders responded intelligently and decisively to the areas for improvement that were identified during stage 1 of the inspection. For example, they further strengthened the pastoral and academic support offered to trainees. This has reduced the likelihood of trainees deferring or withdrawing from training programmes.
7. Leaders have ensured that the SCITT makes a significant contribution towards helping under-represented groups join the teaching workforce. In particular, a large proportion of trainees are female and from minority ethnic backgrounds. The SCITT is therefore contributing to the establishment of a more diverse and representative teaching workforce.
8. Leaders are fully committed to supporting the government's ambitions to increase the proportion of pupils who study an academic curriculum. All secondary trainees are preparing to deliver subjects that are part of the English Baccalaureate. Moreover, a high proportion of female trainees have trained to become science teachers.
9. Leaders have lowered their academic entry criteria in line with the government's encouragement to recruit trainees based on their potential to train rather than their readiness to teach. As a result, the prior attainment of trainees on entry has reduced. Leaders have provided exceptional levels of support to trainees who have found aspects of the training challenging. A small but significant number of trainees have had their training extended to enable them to excel as new entrants to the profession.
10. Leaders have ensured that partners are fully involved in all aspects of the SCITT's work from recruitment and selection to the tracking of alumni.
11. Staff and trainees from across the partnership know that their voice is heard and that leaders act on feedback. For example, leaders have modified the order of trainees' placements in response to views expressed by trainees and mentors. Trainees now return to their original school placement towards the end of their training. This has helped trainees to consolidate and build on the progress that they make on their second placement.
12. Leaders are keen to harness the expertise of different partners. Many different leaders, from across the partnership and beyond, contribute to the delivery of the excellent centre-based training programme.
13. Governance is highly effective. Those responsible for governance hold leaders to account for all aspects of the SCITT's performance. Leaders have ensured that a significant proportion of strategic board members come from schools

outside of Star Academies. This has helped leaders to ensure that the partnership remains focused on working for the benefit of all partners.

14. Leaders are collaborative and outward-facing. They work closely with a number of other SCITTs to share ideas and pool resources.
15. An exceptionally broad range of schools are involved in the partnership. There are several high-performing faith schools within the partnership and a high proportion of schools in challenging circumstances, particularly in relation to levels of deprivation. The partnership includes schools that are not currently judged to be good or better by Ofsted. Leaders have meticulous systems in place to ensure that placement schools are well matched to trainees' developmental needs. Trainees benefit from truly contrasting placements.
16. Communication across the partnership is excellent. School-based mentors greatly appreciate the regular information that they are given. They say that they value the updates they receive on what trainees are learning in centre-based sessions. This is because it enables mentors to align the training that they offer with that delivered by the SCITT.
17. School leaders say that SCITT leaders are always on hand to provide additional support for trainees who are experiencing difficulties. SCITT leaders are very responsive and intervene quickly to alleviate concerns before they become problems. They are equally adept at supporting both trainees and mentors.
18. Leaders' systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the partnership are meticulous. They provide leaders with a thorough and perceptive understanding of the partnership's strengths and developmental needs. Leaders are proactive. They use the information that they gain from their monitoring to make consistent improvements across the partnership.
19. Systems for recruiting trainees are thorough, rigorous and inclusive. Leaders probe candidates' reasons for applying to ensure that they are committed to the profession and to make sure that their values align with those of the SCITT. Candidates also complete a number of activities to ascertain their potential to train. Since opening, leaders have changed their entry criteria to pay greater attention to the individual circumstances of each potential trainee.
20. Leaders understand the fundamental role that mentors play in trainees' development. They have taken steps to strengthen mentoring across the partnership. This has helped mentors to support trainees even more capably. Mentors are accurate in their evaluation of trainees' teaching and most are skilled at enabling trainees to reflect on their practice.
21. Despite this, there remains some variability in the effectiveness of school-based mentoring. In particular, not all mentors consistently set trainees consistently high-quality targets to improve their teaching.

22. Trainees benefit from a well-planned training programme. Leaders sequence the centre-based curriculum thoughtfully so that trainees' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed systematically. For example, trainees are helped to understand the principles of effective teaching before being encouraged to develop their repertoire of teaching strategies.
23. Trainees develop a sound theoretical understanding of teaching. For example, they study learning theories and the implications that these have for the classroom. Trainees also discuss topical educational issues, such as the pros and cons of various approaches to differentiating teaching for certain groups of pupils. Almost all trainees opt to study for the postgraduate certificate in education alongside their training.
24. Trainees become reflective practitioners. They complete action research projects and impact studies to extend their ability to relate theory to practice. For example, trainees complete a project based on different special educational needs. They also complete a study based on different approaches to assessing pupils' learning.
25. Primary trainees are well supported to develop early reading and are well prepared to teach phonics. They have opportunities to plan, deliver and assess pupils' learning in physical education.
26. Leaders attach great significance to the development of trainees' subject knowledge. Most trainees complete additional courses to enhance their subject knowledge. School leaders within the partnership have confidence in what trainees know. Several described Star Teachers SCITT trainees as being particularly academic and scholarly.
27. There remains some unevenness in trainees' ability to sequence pupils' learning well. This reflects the variability that exists in trainees' understanding of curriculum. In particular, primary trainees' ability to sequence pupils' learning in subjects such as history, geography and art is typically not as developed as it is in mathematics and English. Between the two stages of the inspection, leaders began to enact ambitious plans to strengthen this area of the training. NQTs are already showing better practical and theoretical understanding in these important areas.
28. Trainees focus on developing pupils' literacy skills when teaching different subjects. They are aware of the importance of building pupils' vocabularies and understand the harmful impact that weak literacy skills can have on pupils' learning. Training helps trainees to understand how to cater for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Trainees understand the correlation between disadvantage and poor literacy development. They are committed to narrowing the educational divide by closing the 'word gap'.

29. Leaders have crafted the programme to ensure that key themes are regularly revisited. For example, supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a golden thread that runs throughout the course. As a result, trainees and NQTs are highly skilled in adapting their teaching to meet the needs of this group of pupils.
30. The training to support trainees to deliver personal, social, health and economic education is exemplary. Trainees are helped to address controversial topics with pupils in a sensitive and age-appropriate way. For example, trainees are able to help pupils to reconcile issues relating to equality, such as sexual orientation, with different religious beliefs.
31. Trainees benefit from a diverse range of opportunities that enable them to fulfil their wider professional responsibilities as teachers. Trainees have high expectations of themselves and are thoroughly professional in their conduct. During teaching placements, they are keen to fully immerse themselves in the broader life of their schools by taking part in trips, visits and other extra-curricular activities.
32. Trainees develop a clear, thorough and appropriate understanding of safeguarding. They are helped to develop a nuanced awareness of the risks that are potentially greater in different types of setting and within different contexts. They are aware of potential symptoms that may indicate that a pupil is a risk from dangers such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and radicalisation.
33. Leaders have ensured that the training programme is flexible, personalised and responsive to both trainees' needs and emerging national priorities. 'Star blast' sessions augment the fixed training curriculum and help trainees to stay abreast of developing priorities. For example, leaders delivered a session on knife crime in response to the increase in attacks on young people that was widely reported across the media.
34. Trainees greatly value the high-quality training that they receive on behaviour management. Trainees and NQTs are knowledgeable about how to establish and maintain a positive environment for learning. They are calm, assertive and respectful towards pupils.
35. Leaders are considerate of trainees' workload. They ensure that trainees do not complete tasks that have little impact on helping them to become high-quality teachers. Trainees are helped to maintain a healthy work-life balance. They benefit from sessions on organisation and how to manage workload.
36. Trainees are helped to maintain their well-being. For example, leaders run sessions on mindfulness and organise social events that enable trainees to bond with each other.

37. The training programme ensures that trainees are ready to excel at the end of their training year. School leaders are resoundingly positive about the calibre of teacher developed by the SCITT.
38. Leaders understand that their work is not done at the end of the training year. Trainees are supported as they become NQTs. This has helped to ensure that, to date, all previous trainees have remained within the profession. The partnership's commitment to ongoing professional development is reflected in their involvement in developing training for new teachers which aligns with the Early Career Framework.
39. Outcomes for trainees are excellent. In 2017/18, all trainees completed their training and secured employment. Many trainees reached the highest standard of attainment by the end of their training.
40. In 2018/19, a higher proportion of trainees reached the highest standard of attainment in their training. In particular, more male and secondary trainees attained the highest standard compared to their counterparts from the previous year. The partnership's assessment of trainees' performance is accurate.
41. A small but significant number of trainees deferred their training during 2018/19. Some also had their training extended. These trainees have all received exceptional levels of personalised support. All are due to attain QTS in the near future.
42. Trainees perform well on their teaching placements and make impressive progress over the course of their training. However, it is common for trainees' performance to dip during the early stages of their second placement. Since stage 1 of the inspection, leaders have planned clear and appropriate actions to strengthen further support for trainees between their two placements. However, the impact of these planned actions is yet to be seen.
43. The partnership complies fully with all the requirements for ITE. It has robust systems in place to check and verify this. The partnership meets all the statutory safeguarding requirements.

Annex: Partnership schools

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

Blackburn Central High School, Blackburn

Eden Boys' School, Bolton

Lower Darwen Primary School, Darwen

Manchester Communication Academy, Manchester

The Olive School, Blackburn

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn

Seven Stars Primary School, Leyland

St Barnabas CofE Primary Academy, Darwen

Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School, Blackburn

Tauheedul Islam Girls' School, Blackburn

Witton Park Academy, Blackburn

ITE partnership details

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Lead inspector	Will Smith
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Phases provided	Primary and secondary
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Previous inspection report	N/A
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