

Mid Somerset Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates: 14–17 January 2013

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors in accordance with the *Handbook for inspecting initial teacher education from September 2012*.

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

	Employment-based routes
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 employment-based routes

Information about the employment-based partnership

1. Mid Somerset Consortium provides employment-based initial teacher training for graduate trainees. The consortium is located at the lead school, Crispin School, and works as a partnership of six key partner schools and over 30 associate maintained and independent schools. Mid Somerset Consortium has applied to the Teaching Agency to change its status to become an accredited provider of school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) from September 2013.
2. At the time of the inspection, there were 40 trainees studying the full-time graduate teacher course. The training covers the 11 to 16 age range across a range of secondary subjects. Subjects offered this year are English, mathematics, science including chemistry, physics and biology, music, physical education, dance, drama, modern languages, history and religious education.

Information about the employment-based ITE inspection

3. Inspectors watched six lessons taught by trainees, two by recently qualified teachers (RQTs within their first and second year of teaching once qualified) and six by newly qualified teachers (NQTs, who are in their first year of teaching), across six partnership schools. In addition, inspectors observed trainers giving feedback to trainees and scrutinised trainers' lesson observations records and reports, trainees' teaching files and evidence for the Teachers' Standards, and documents relating to trainees' professional and subject knowledge enhancement.
4. The lead inspector met with members of the partnership's Strategic Management Group and checked all compliance requirements with the partnership manager. On school visits, inspectors held meetings with trainees, NQTs, RQTs, mentors and initial teacher training coordinators (ITTCs). Inspectors scrutinised centrally held monitoring reports from quality assurance visits, external assessor reports and evaluations from trainees, former trainees and mentors.
5. One inspector observed a professional training session in a special school as part of the professional studies training in learning to teach disabled students and those with special educational needs.
6. Inspectors also took account of the responses to the online questionnaire, completed by 39 trainees.

Inspection Team

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Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the employment-based partnership are:

- Consistently high outcomes for trainees who continue to excel when they join the teaching profession, both as NQTs and in progressing to leadership roles in partner schools.
- High employment rates that exceed those typically found nationally and successfully support local recruitment and teacher retention in partner schools.
- Outstanding coherence of the training course, challenging trainees to stretch themselves to attain consistently high quality teaching skills by the end of the course.
- Trainees' outstanding subject knowledge, their ability to teach disabled students and those with special educational needs and their high level of skill in promoting and reinforcing appropriate behaviour for learning.
- Complementary school placements that provide fertile training environments for trainees, helping them effectively plan and teach students with differing learning needs.
- Outstanding use of expertise in partnership schools to provide trainees and NQTs with high quality mentoring to support rapid and sustained progress, guiding trainees to become astute, highly reflective practitioners.
- Excellent recruitment procedures used to select high calibre trainees who want to join, and remain in, the teaching profession.
- Outstanding leadership of the partnership that combines high quality training in schools with a shared trust and a deeply embedded commitment to excellence in initial teacher training.

What does the employment-based partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Ensure that all leaders and managers in partner schools have greater strategic responsibility for, and ownership of, driving course

improvements across the whole partnership and formally assess the impact of training in their schools.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are outstanding

7. Since the last inspection, Mid Somerset Consortium has sustained high employment rates above those typically found nationally. The proportion of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) securing employment in partner schools is frequently above that of other employment-based providers. The provider effectively supports local recruitment needs and the high employment rates affirm the Mid Somerset Consortium brand of NQTs; highly competent, committed and enthusiastic teachers, able to teach at least consistently good and often outstanding lessons, and who progress well in their teaching careers.
8. Mentors, ITTCs and senior leaders confirm that the calibre of NQTs trained through the Consortium continues to be high. Many graduates successfully complete their NQT year and go on to become mentors in their schools, always wanting 'to give something back to the partnership'. Excellent professional development programmes in partnership schools provide NQTs and RQTs with training that enhances their teaching expertise and raises students' achievement. Rapid promotion to middle and senior leadership roles is testimony to the quality of those trained by the Consortium. Capturing, analysing and celebrating the destinations and successes of alumni, by the partnership manager and her team, is increasingly robust.
9. During the inspection, NQTs and trainees taught good and outstanding lessons. Training coordinators and mentors confirm the typicality of high quality teaching, in particular reporting how well trainees were working with students they had just met at the start of their second school placements. In one atypical instance, a lesson in an NQT's second subject resulted in a less successful performance than expected. The NQT's confidence, based on previously good teaching, was sustained by leaders' quick actions to provide additional support.
10. Trainees and NQTs plan lessons with good attention to levelling work for students' differing needs. They know how to access and use information about students' progress and targets to help them to improve. A key strength in their work is planning work for, and teaching, disabled students and those with special educational needs. This, coupled with trainees' excellent skills in managing behaviour, ensures they establish high expectations for all students in their classes. Trainees' subject knowledge is assessed comprehensively at the start of the course.

11. Support from knowledgeable subject tutors and mentors help trainees quickly address areas of weaker subject knowledge through subject development workshops and school-based research. As a result, trainees' subject knowledge is strong. Trainees plan a range of stimulating activities to sustain students' interest.
12. Leaders strive to recruit the highest calibre of trainees and, as a result, sustain high completion rates. Very few trainees withdraw and when this does happen, it is mainly for personal reasons as opposed to course-related issues. The high percentage of mature trainees who join the course use their expertise from industry and their experience as learning support assistants, technicians or sports coaches to establish purposeful working relationships with colleagues and students. They are adept at managing their time to good effect. All trainees, including those who have much less previous experience in school settings, respond very well to guidance about how to improve their planning and teaching. Trainees become very reflective, thoughtful practitioners who seek out opportunities to develop their knowledge and experience in schools. Most NQTs and trainees can quickly analyse what they learn by shadowing students in lessons, seeing their behaviour in a range of classroom-based and practical subjects, and observing teaching in other subject departments. Trainees develop very good skills in planning and working with teaching assistants.
13. The percentage of trainees attaining at an outstanding level by the end of the course has risen since the last inspection, reaching 64% in 2012. There is no discernible difference in the attainment of different groups of trainees, for example by gender, ethnicity or by trainees with a disability. Notable success has been achieved through increased subject-specific training sessions for chemists, biologists and physicists, helping to raise the provider's outstanding profile and giving trainees greater confidence in teaching their non-specialist subject strand. Attainment in all other subjects continues to rise. Any slight variation in percentage by subject is attributable to often very small numbers as opposed to difference in the quality of training by subjects.

The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding.

14. The overall quality of the training is outstanding, enabling trainees to exceed the expectations of the Teachers' Standards by the end of the training. Trainees leave the course equipped with the knowledge and competences required for a successful NQT year. Outstanding training successfully combines school-based training with an excellent range of complementary professional studies workshops and subject knowledge 'upgrade' sessions, all designed to prepare trainees for their teaching and wider professional role in schools.

15. Trainees and NQTs who met with inspectors reported very high levels of satisfaction with each aspect of their training. They spoke very positively about how the coherence and depth of the course impact on the quality of their teaching and their ability to reflect on and subsequently improve their practice. Such high quality is also confirmed in very positive results to the Teaching Agency's NQT surveys over the last three years and most recently in 2012.
16. Written assignments link directly to topical educational issues, requiring trainees to draw on published research, their observations and reflections in schools, and then apply what they have learnt to their teaching. This deepens their understanding of theory and practice and helps most trainees question why certain approaches may work in some settings but not in others. The use of topic-based conferences, such as those for learning how to teach disabled students and those with special educational needs, provides trainees with highly relevant understanding of legislation and very good training in planning for differing needs. Through a visit to a special school, trainees see first-hand how rigorous planning and teaching raise aspirations for, and expectations of, students with special educational needs, and many comment on how much this raises their expectations in their placement schools.
17. The two-day conference for learning to teach students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) gives trainees experience of a range of teaching methods used in an inner city diverse school setting. This complements their training in two contrasting school settings. Compared to trainees' ability to teach students with special educational needs, not all trainees are confident in working with students for whom English is an additional language. This aspect of the training is continually reviewed by trainers and leaders to find innovative ways of deepening trainees' work with such students and in ethnically diverse settings beyond their placements in schools with mainly White British student populations. Trainees working in the independent schools in the partnership achieve very well when working with learners for whom English is an additional language.
18. Trainees achieve extremely well in managing students' behaviour. Highly competent trainees and NQTs sustain high expectations, helping their students make at least good progress in lessons. Professional studies sessions for behaviour management are of high quality and students report that these are very enjoyable. Trainees debate different approaches and use case studies to discuss how to meet the needs of students they teach who present particularly challenging behaviour. Contrasting school placements give trainees good opportunity to work with students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Trainees and NQTs have an excellent understanding of the critical

relationship between behaviour and students' achievement in lessons and over time.

19. The partnership draws on its own expertise to deliver many of the taught workshops, using advanced skills teachers as well as middle and senior leaders who bring contemporary issues to the forefront of the training. Trainees develop good understanding of bullying issues, particularly in relation to social media, as well as a secure understanding of child protection. Trainees evaluate the quality of each session, and the partnership manager, along with the ITTCs, annually reviews the content and sequencing of sessions to best accommodate ideas from trainees. Leaders quality assure a sample of these sessions each year, helping presenters develop their practice in teaching graduate trainees. Feedback given to presenters by leaders is extremely positive about content and delivery.
20. Within school-based training and through the professional studies workshops, trainees develop a good understanding of teaching literacy and numeracy in their subject and understand how to use whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy. In a Year 9 physics lesson exploring static electricity, students used speaking and listening activities to give careful consideration to the correct use of scientific terminology. Students had many opportunities to work together to practise and further develop their understanding of these terms.
21. Trainees and NQTs are overwhelmingly positive about the high quality of training in schools. Through individualised training plans, regular lesson observations and weekly mentor meetings, trainees receive oral and written feedback about strengths and areas for development in their teaching, referenced to the Teachers' Standards. In weekly review meetings, mentors guide trainees to reflect on their progress and targets are set collaboratively. Feedback on the lesson observation forms is occasionally too dense because mentors try to include too much about each of the Teachers' Standards as opposed to pinpointing key foci for lesson observations. Nevertheless, the analysis of strengths and areas for development in the oral feedback gives trainees clear guidance about how to improve their teaching. Leaders carefully track trainees' progress through the range of assessment points, feedback from mentors and ITTCs in schools and through visits by externally appointed tutors.
22. Trainees make rapid progress over the course, but the good and outstanding progress of trainees in the autumn term falters slightly for some trainees at the start of the second school placement. This is because not all trainees quickly receive incisive targets to know how to continue to improve their teaching in the contrasting school setting.

23. Assessment of trainees is accurate. The quality of training for mentors and ITTCs is good. This helps all school-based trainers review how to give feedback to trainees to sustain their progress and assess the quality of evidence against each of the Teachers' Standards. The provider has introduced two new assessment points, 'Progress Points 1 and 2', which culminate in a final assessment and successfully help trainees exemplify how they refine evidence for the Teachers' Standards over time. Trainees find the moderation process by mentors, ITTCs and external assessors very useful in benchmarking their performance against criteria in the detailed course handbook. A few mentors and ITTCs rightly suggest that there is even more scope for developing models of best practice in the partnership by bringing trainers together more often in schools and developing further their role in strategic course improvement.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding.

24. Described as inspiring, passionate and expecting the very best of trainees, the partnership manager leads the Mid Somerset Consortium with an energy and focus that helps everyone involved to support trainees to achieve extremely well. The vision for excellence is effectively communicated to trainees and all training partners; schools want to work with the Consortium and be part of a vibrant, well-regarded training partnership, which ensures high calibre NQTs join the teaching profession.
25. Leaders have sustained high quality outcomes since the last inspection and made further improvements to ensure that training is now outstanding. There is a clear trend of improvement in the proportion of trainees attaining at an outstanding level by the end of the course. Employment rates remain well above those found nationally and the high quality pastoral support and outstanding training help retain trainees on the course. The provider is fully compliant with all requirements for ITT.
26. The partnership's Strategic Management Group regularly reviews how to improve the training course and the key priorities for improvement are derived from insightful self-evaluation. Feedback from ITTCs and current and former trainees helps leaders make decisions about the content and sequencing of workshops for the professional studies programme, making certain that trainees learn about new educational initiatives designed to help raise student achievement. Chaired by a deputy headteacher from one of the partner schools, the Strategic Management Group monitors and evaluates the quality of training across the partnership, using robust evidence from quality assurance visits by visiting tutors and external assessors.

27. The frequent well-focused visits by external assessors, combined with excellent work by ITTCs in schools, means that NQTs, trainees, and mentors receive high quality feedback to improve their work. Mentors and ITTCs rightly praise the work of the external assessors and visiting tutors. Through joint observations of training, lesson observations and scrutiny of documents, assessors guide mentors' and ITTCs' professional skills in coaching NQTs and trainees to achieve very well. This builds successfully on good quality mentor training which supports mentors' understanding of the new tracking system for trainees' progress and the new lesson observation form. Leaders target their support to the needs of new and experienced mentors and quickly respond to feedback from ITTCs.
28. Members of the Strategic Management Group recognise that there is scope for the rich findings from many quality assurance visits annually and over time to be used to develop models of the very best training throughout the entire partnership. There is also potential for leaders and managers in partner schools to have greater strategic responsibility for, and ownership of, driving course improvements across the whole partnership.
29. Self-evaluation is accurate. It draws together quantitative and qualitative data giving leaders a sharp view of the strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use measurable success criteria linked to outcomes for trainees more rigorously than at the time of the last inspection. Training partners understand their respective roles in driving improvement in weekly training and are held to account through quality assurance visits. The Strategic Management Group has not yet fully embedded a detailed understanding of key strategic priorities within every school, or asked schools themselves to review and report on the impact of their training as part of annual self-assessment.
30. The robust and demanding two-stage recruitment and selection process, highlighted as a key strength at the last inspection, remains. The provider continues to use senior leaders for interviews and ensures all prospective candidates are observed working with young people. This helps test candidates' aptitude for teaching. The combination of two interviews, visits to schools to work with students, testing of literacy and numeracy skills, and candidates' own self-assessment of their subject knowledge gives leaders a well-rounded picture which they use diligently in offering places to selected candidates.
31. Trainees comment favourably on the challenging recruitment process, setting the tone for the year ahead. Trainees confirm that high expectations are set at interviews so that they join the course under no illusion about demands on their time and the emotional resilience and

commitment needed if they are to become good or better teachers. Trainees rise to this challenge because good support for upgrading their subject knowledge, combined with detailed guidance for planning lessons, helps them make rapid progress in their teaching.

32. The small nature of the partnership, together with the strong collegiality of school leaders and the partnership manager, provides a secure, forward-looking team who keep abreast of changes in initial teacher education. Together they continue to remodel the consortium to serve the needs of trainees and schools locally. The partnership demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe teaching:

Crispin School

The Castle School

Huish Episcopi Academy

Chilton Trinity School

King's School, Bruton

Bridgwater Academy

Haygrove Academy, Bridgwater

ITE partnership details

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