

University of Oxford

Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY

Inspection dates 25 to 28 March 2024

Inspection judgements

Secondary age-phase

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education and training	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

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

The University of Oxford successfully realises its ambition to ensure that trainees are as well prepared as they can be to become excellent teachers. The innovative course design has an exceptionally strong subject focus. Trainees acquire highly developed subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical understanding to teach complex concepts in an accessible manner to pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Trainees are known as 'interns'. The internship model highlights the shared high expectations and seamless partnership between schools and the provider. The positive relationships and superb communication across the partnership mean that trainees feel extremely well supported. Their well-being is carefully considered. One trainee described the support from the provider as 'relentless, in a kind and compassionate way'.

One notable strength of the programme is how trainees learn to be critical consumers of generic and subject-specific research. They make sophisticated use of pertinent research about disadvantaged pupils to inform their practice, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Trainees complete small-scale research projects, guided by their partnership schools, which subtly influence the schools' practice.

The course prepares trainees strongly for the realities of teaching, including how to promote positive behaviour and manage their workload. Trainees are supported to become reflective practitioners who build strong networks, including through professional associations. They appreciate how everyone in the partnership is so positive about teaching. One trainee reflected, 'The passion they have for education is infectious.'

Information about this ITE provider

- The University of Oxford offers the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) to gain qualified teacher status (QTS) in the secondary phase. Trainees study to teach pupils aged 11 to 18 years.
- Trainees study to teach either English, mathematics, science, modern languages, geography, history or religious education.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 133 trainees on the course.
- The University of Oxford works with 34 schools across four local authorities.
- Almost all schools were judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted at their most recent inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted by three of His Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including the course director, deputy course director and director of graduate studies. Inspectors also met with subject leaders, curriculum tutors, subject mentors, headteachers and representatives of the partnership committee.
- Inspectors spoke to 38 trainees, 20 mentors, 10 early career teachers and 22 headteachers or professional tutors. The inspection team visited five schools as part of the inspection.
- The inspection team carried out focused reviews to help them understand how well trainees are prepared for teaching. The focus review subjects were geography, modern languages, science, English and history.

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

Trainees benefit from exemplary training with a laser-sharp subject focus. The course is sequenced coherently and taught collaboratively by expert trainers at the university and in schools. The provider uses a precisely designed structure that builds trainees' learning exceptionally well. Trainees start by studying research and theory, observing skilled staff in schools and developing their own practice before being expertly supported to reflect on their learning at the university. The programme fully complies with the core content framework and exceeds it in many respects. It builds trainees' knowledge and skills very well over time, across different contexts, to successfully prepare them for the early years of teaching.

The provider inspires and equips trainees to teach their subject impressively well. As one trainee reflected, 'They have put life into my subject.' Trainees develop excellent subject and subject pedagogical knowledge. Subject-specific research is central to the design of the programme. Trainees acquire a sophisticated understanding of how pupils learn. This includes a focus on common misconceptions in each subject and how to make complex

ideas accessible to all pupils. The course sharply focuses on inclusion. Trainees learn to skilfully adapt their teaching to support pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. They work alongside expert colleagues to develop a rich understanding of how to support pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language. The placement week in a special school or setting enriches trainees' learning substantially.

The integration of the course curriculum between schools and the university is unique and mutually beneficial. The course is designed jointly by schools and the university. School-based training powerfully complements what trainees learn at the university. Schools are deeply invested in the work of the partnership. Headteachers recognise how trainees positively influence their school with cutting edge practice and research. One headteacher commented how trainees from the programme develop a 'profound sense of ambition to contribute'.

Highly skilled mentors provide exceptional guidance. The university ensures that mentor training is robust and ongoing feedback refines mentors' skills in order to support trainees. The provider quality assures the target setting process rigorously. This ensures that targets are precise and sharply directed at the most important content that trainees need to master. Trainees appreciate this valuable support. One trainee reflected how mentors 'act as a compass to show the direction to take'. The assessment of trainees is robust and tightly focused on how well they are learning the curriculum. Ambitious check points are built in to support trainees' development. The university provides extremely effective additional support to any trainee in need of extra help. Trainees benefit from high-quality guidance from subject mentors, professional tutors and curriculum tutors.

Leaders are passionate in providing the best possible opportunities for trainees. They have a precise understanding of the course strengths, and this is systematically informed by feedback from schools, trainees and subject tutors. However, they are not complacent and strive to continually refine the course. Leaders sensitively adapt it in response to trainees' and schools' needs. They are challenged and supported very effectively by the partnership committee. Headteachers appreciate how early career teachers from this provider are professional, ambitious to teach all pupils, and enthusiastic subject specialists.

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

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number 70057

Inspection number 10311035

This inspection was carried out in accordance with the [initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook](#), which sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2020.

Type of ITE provider Higher education institution

Phases provided Secondary

Dates of previous inspection 18 June and 21 November 2018

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, Lead inspector
Linda Culling
Marian Feeley

His Majesty's Inspector
His Majesty's Inspector
His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phase
Bartholomew School	137919	Secondary
Cheney School	139146	Secondary
Didcot Girls' School	138490	Secondary
Fitzharrys School	146392	Secondary
Wood Green School	144008	Secondary

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