

Barr Beacon SCITT

Barr Beacon School, Old Hall Lane, Walsall WS9 0RF

Inspection dates

22 to 25 January 2024

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

Outstanding

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

Trainees are overwhelmingly positive about the support and guidance they receive. The small nature of the provision means that staff/trainee relationships are strong. Leaders adjust and adapt the course to trainees' individual needs, including where there are single numbers following a particular route. Trainees' workload is considered at every level, including by the executive committee, to ensure it is manageable.

Central training is high quality. It prepares trainees well for the rigours and realities of classroom life. Leaders have placed the most crucial content, such as safeguarding and behaviour management, at the forefront of the programme. The explicit focus on understanding the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language, builds trainees' skills well. Careful planning ensures that trainees develop these key areas from the outset.

The training programme is extremely well structured and sequenced. Professional studies and subject-specific sessions are closely aligned and well timed in the programme to coincide with school placements. This allows trainees to apply the theory and strategies learned to their classroom practice. Primary trainees benefit from high-quality training in teaching early reading and systematic synthetic phonics. 'Carousel weeks' enhance the programme offer and extend trainees' knowledge of different settings.

Communication between the provider, schools and trainees is strong. Weekly bulletins ensure that all parties know the focus for the week and keep everyone on track.

Information about this ITE provider

- Since the last inspection, the provider has extended its initial teacher education programme to include primary phase training. This phase was added in September 2021.
- The provider currently works with 32 school settings. This consists of 16 primary schools and 16 secondary schools. Partnership schools are spread across four local authorities, including Walsall, Wolverhampton, Warwickshire and Birmingham.
- There are eight trainees in the primary phase and 23 in the secondary phase.
- All trainees who complete their programme achieve a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). An assessment-only route is available to experienced school practitioners who do not hold QTS.
- Primary-phase trainees qualify to teach ages three to seven or five to 11 years. Secondary-phase trainees qualify to teach ages 11 to 16 in different subjects or 14 to 19 years in business studies or psychology.
- Schools in which trainees are placed are rated from requires improvement to outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by three of His Majesty's Inspectors.
- Inspectors met with the School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) director and the primary and secondary phase managers, school mentors, professional mentors, subject course leaders and school leaders involved in the partnership.
- Inspectors also spoke with members of the Matrix Academy Trust board and members of the executive committee.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation linked to the training programme, such as the annual programme of professional and subject study sessions, phase and subject handbooks, training materials and trainee assessments. They also considered leaders' own self-evaluation, improvement plan and external examiner reports.
- Inspectors conducted focused reviews for the primary phase in early reading, mathematics and design technology. In the secondary phase, focused reviews included English, geography and physical education.
- Inspectors visited four primary schools and three secondary schools. During these visits, they sampled lessons, observed trainee's feedback and held discussions with senior leaders, school mentors, professional mentors and trainees.
- In total, the team spoke with 14 trainees, 18 professional mentors and mentors, and 12 early careers teachers as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the provider's own trainee and mentor surveys completed during the autumn term.
- Inspectors met with leaders to check the partnership's conformity with the ITE compliance criteria and looked at records of safeguarding checks.

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

Leaders have the highest expectations of trainees. The dedication and expertise of centre staff, particularly the SCITT director, ensures that the goal to equip local schools with well-qualified early career teachers is fully realised. The provider has thought carefully about the range of subjects offered in the secondary phase. Internships are offered in subjects which are hard to recruit to.

The curriculum is ambitious and particularly effective in promoting, and going beyond, the requirements of the core content framework. The structure and spiral approach mean that trainees get many opportunities to learn about or deepen their knowledge on the main strands which underpin each programme. For example, there is a strong emphasis on creating a powerful learning environment. This element runs throughout the course and sets the scene for trainees to model professionalism and build respectful and trusting relationships with pupils.

Primary-phase trainees have a good understanding of how to teach early reading due to skilled training and support. They understand systematic synthetic phonics and the process of decoding and blending. All trainees hone their skills through an intensive training and practice week at the lead partner school. Trainees receive individual feedback to ensure they know how to adapt teaching and build reading fluency.

Leaders ensure that there are effective systems for assessing trainees and checking their progress. Trainee's files and ongoing development audits are scrutinised to ensure trainees are not falling behind in their work. Weekly lesson observations and collaborative setting of meaningful targets help trainees to identify areas for development to strengthen their practice.

The link between central and school-based training is explicit and purposefully integrated. Training in the secondary phase is strong. The provider has a robust selection process in place to ensure that the most experienced and well-qualified subject course leaders are appointed. Primary trainees also receive a high-quality training offer from the lead partner school. External specialists make a significant contribution to trainees' knowledge in areas such as the Equality Act 2010 and emotional coaching.

There is a considerable programme of training, monitoring and support for school mentors. Leaders tailor training based on mentors' experience. However, checks made on the quality, consistency and impact of mentoring are less well developed and rigorous in the primary phase than the secondary. This means that assessments of some trainees are not always as precise as they should be, and mentors do not receive precise feedback on what they could improve.

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

(Information for the provider and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' quality assurance of mentoring is not as well established and precise in the primary phase as it is in the secondary phase. There are a small number of inconsistencies in the assessments made of trainees which result in less precise developmental feedback for mentors. Leaders should ensure that the quality assurance of mentoring in the primary phase is consistent, so that all trainees are accurately assessed throughout the programme, and mentors know how to improve their practice.

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

The provider meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

ITE provider details

Unique reference number	70361
Inspection number	10303743

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	SCITT
Phases provided	Primary and secondary
Date of previous inspection	30 April 2018 and 22 October 2018

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, Lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Beech	His Majesty's Inspector
Stuart Clarkson	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Placement schools and colleges

Inspectors visited the following schools as part of this inspection:

Name	URN	ITE phases
Bloxwich Academy	137274	Primary
Delves Infant School	104150	Primary
Ryders Hayes School	136619	Primary
Woodlands Academy	138343	Primary
Barr Beacon School	136885	Secondary
Elmwood School	135461	Secondary
Turves Green Boys' School	148521	Secondary

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