

Working in partnership to improve access and achievement: UCL Institute of Education

URN: 70119

Region: London

Remit: Initial teacher education (ITE)

Provider background

The [UCL Institute of Education](#) trains more than 1,500 trainees every year, working in partnership with over 600 educational settings in Greater London. It was inspected in November 2013 and its primary, secondary and further education (FE) initial teacher education (ITE) partnerships were [judged to be outstanding](#). The Institute of Education played a significant role in London Challenge and offers a Teach First programme; this is inspected separately.

Brief description

This good practice example shows how the Institute of Education has worked with primary, secondary and FE settings to tackle [access and achievement](#) issues, raise the overall quality of the teaching workforce and meet the needs of educational settings in London extremely well.

The good practice in detail

The Institute of Education's ITE partnerships produce large numbers of consistently good, and often outstanding, primary and secondary newly qualified teachers (NQTs) for schools and teachers/trainers for the FE and skills sector.

The Institute has always worked in close partnership with London schools, and in the last few years has been active in collaborating with them to introduce new routes of initial teacher education, most notably School Direct. Schools value the support they receive and there is mutual recognition of the valuable roles that both schools and higher education play in the partnership to ensure the provision of high quality ITE.

As the largest supplier of new teachers for educational settings in London, including some of the most successful, the Institute has been heavily involved in a significant urban education improvement programme. This ensures that trainees are well equipped with an understanding of inner-city settings and the strategies that contribute to their success.

The primary, secondary and FE programme teams give careful consideration to access and achievement issues. They are aware of the needs and challenges involved in working in urban settings right from the start of the training.

Very strong levels of partnership engagement ensure the continued relevance of training to the changing needs of London's schools. These settings also provide trainees with practical experience of working in challenging socio-economic urban contexts. This not only raises trainees' awareness of how settings successfully tackle access and achievement issues, but also encourages them to seek their first posts in these types of settings. Employment rates are high.

Resources are dedicated to strengthening partnerships with educational settings. This supports both initial teacher training and continuing professional development for all members of staff.

Working together in partnership

The Institute's teacher training portfolio includes partnerships with:

- Teach First
- a range of educational settings, clusters, alliances and academy chains to support School Direct
- three school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) partnerships.

The Institute gives school partnership awards in recognition of the strength and success of sustained partnership settings in:

- initial teacher education
- professional and leadership development
- research and development.

The ITE partnerships have well-established arrangements in place to involve colleagues from a range of settings in the delivery of centre-based programmes. This includes secondments and exchanges through schools and the involvement of school-based colleagues in the partnerships' recruitment and selection processes. Colleagues involved in these exchange arrangements enhance the capacity of the partnerships to deliver high quality training in teaching, learning and evidence-based teaching because they can draw on recent research and practical experience of teaching.

The partnerships have worked together to locate more training in schools and settings. This has proved productive. Visits to educational settings give trainees a broad range of experience in:

- working with children and young people in their age phases
- subject specialisms
- teaching a diverse range of pupils and learners.

Secondary partnership working

The secondary ITE partnership of 250 schools includes a wide range of types of schools across London that serve ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. The secondary partnership constantly seeks to develop new ways to build stronger relationships and use the expertise of both the Institute and its partner schools.

All secondary postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and School Direct tuition fee funded trainees attend a 'Securing achievement for all' lecture at the start of their training. This lecture focuses on:

- the importance of teachers understanding the diverse contexts they work in and the range of pupils they will be teaching, to ensure that every pupil is able to achieve their full potential
- planning for effective lessons that address the needs of groups of pupils and meet the individual learning needs of individuals within those groups, so that they make the biggest impact possible on attainment.

In the first week of the secondary PGCE programme, all trainees also attend another lecture delivered by the headteacher and pupils of an outstanding London school. The school has a strong track record of transforming life chances for young people living in a challenging socio-economic context. This lecture gives an insight into the challenges the trainees will face in London schools and focuses on two main areas:

- the way in which schools can make a positive contribution to a local community
- the knowledge, skills and qualities that teachers need to succeed in this context and to make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement.

Trainees describe these lectures as 'fascinating', 'inspiring' and 'extremely useful'. They remind trainees why they have chosen to become teachers and make clear how their training will equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful teachers working in an inner-city area.

During the secondary PGCE year, all trainees complete two periods of teaching practice, each of between 12 and 13 weeks' duration. The aim is to provide trainees with the experience of two contrasting schools, so that they understand the different challenges provided by different schools, in different contexts, serving different communities.

The secondary partnership tries to ensure that every trainee completes at least one placement in a school in challenging socio-economic circumstances. There are plenty of schools in London that meet this criterion and are also judged 'good' or 'outstanding'. The vast majority of schools where trainees are placed are either good or outstanding, but the partnership also places some trainees in schools that require improvement where it is confident that high quality training can be provided within a particular subject department.

Forming new partnerships

A strategic priority for the secondary partnership is supporting School Direct and early career teachers. It has facilitated structured progression for teachers through the first part of their career by developing new relationships with alliances, clusters and academy chains and drawing on their practice and expertise to enhance the quality of training.

These particular characteristics of the partnership's work can be seen in the following examples, where clusters, alliances and academy chains have been awarded the Institute's 'specialist partner' status.

The City Excellence Cluster

The [City Excellence cluster](#) involves six outstanding secondary schools in Tower Hamlets. The Institute works with the lead school, Mulberry High School for Girls, which has gained status as one of its specialist partners. The headteacher, Vanessa Ogden, explains:

'In partnership with the Institute we have designed our City Excellence approach to ITE and professional development for our mentors. Our collaborative research agenda supports a focus on our inclusive community.'

Each year the cluster recruits School Direct and School Direct (salaried) trainees who are expected to demonstrate commitment to working in a challenging inner-city context. During the 2013/14 academic year, the cluster trained 31 trainees.

Trainees work in at least two of the cluster's schools and receive an enhanced training programme throughout the year, which focuses on meeting the needs of pupils living within this challenging inner-city context. The six schools aim to employ all trainees recruited to School Direct at the end of their training to ensure that the skills they have learnt are then put into practice for the benefit of young people in the locality. The relationship between the secondary partnership and this cluster has been extended to include seamless support for trainees as they move into their induction year via a tailor-made continuing professional development (CPD) programme.

The Wandle Teaching School Alliance

The [Wandle Teaching School Alliance](#) includes nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. A headteacher of one of the primary schools involved says:

'School Direct, PGCE places and support for our middle leaders have been at the core of our partnership working this year. Now we are looking to offer accreditation opportunities for our professional development programmes.'

The alliance recruits School Direct and School Direct (salaried) trainees and offers placements for PGCE trainees. The trainees' experience is of high quality and mentors are very well prepared to manage the development and progression of trainees to NQTs. High quality mentoring is a priority for this alliance. It has worked, in collaboration with the Institute's leadership centre, to develop a two-year mentoring and coaching programme for mentors across the alliance to enhance their skills and the impact they make on trainees' and early career teachers' development.

The North East London Teaching School Alliance

The [North East London Teaching School Alliance](#) (NELTA) consists of 15 schools with a strong commitment to the secondary ITE partnership. The alliance works together to develop collaborative approaches to school improvement, ITE and mentor development. It is committed to recruiting a significant numbers of trainees, mainly through School Direct. During 2013/14, 33 trainees were trained within this alliance.

Six secondary schools in Ealing provide 'golden days' of professional studies for trainees. The days have included sessions run by staff from the alliance's schools, enabling each school to demonstrate their excellent practice in specific areas and a day dedicated to 'getting the basics right', with workshops on:

- working as a form tutor
- e-safety for teachers
- setting homework
- marking and providing feedback
- using data, numeracy and literacy
- assessment
- classroom management
- differentiation.

These sessions were designed to equip trainees to develop their teaching skills further by strengthening their knowledge and understanding and applying this to the classroom context and issues facing secondary teachers in schools on a day-to-day basis.

United Teaching academy chain

United Teaching comprises primary and secondary academies and independent schools across the country. In 2014/15, this alliance will train 100 School Direct and School Direct (salaried) trainees across both the primary and secondary phases. Of these trainees, 69 are based in the southern region, where a PGCE programme is delivered by the Institute. This programme started with a 'summer institute' delivered by all members of the partnership at the host school. Trainees receive weekly professional studies sessions and training at the host school followed by four days each week at their main placement school. Their second school experience is organised in two parts – at the host school and via a short block placement. This weekly experience at the host school ensures that trainees develop strategies to enhance their teaching skills and their impact on pupils' learning within the classroom context of an inner-London school. It often provides a very different experience from their main placement school. Support for trainees includes:

- weekly meetings with subject mentors to discuss progress and set and/or review developmental targets
- weekly lesson observations
- termly reports.

United Teaching has recently been accredited as a SCITT provider in its own right. Collaboration between the Institute and the SCITT is planned to continue in 2015/16.

Primary partnership working

Input on the primary PGCE has many parallels to that experienced by the secondary trainees. The 'Securing achievement for all' lecture sets the context at the beginning of a module on learning:

- how to plan and teach effective lessons
- the value of formative assessment and feedback to pupils so that they make maximum progress in their learning.

Like the secondary, primary trainees experience two contrasting placement schools. They also complete a two-week placement in another educational setting such as an early years centre, special school, pupil referral unit or a special unit attached to a school. On returning to teach in mainstream classrooms, the trainees are much more alert to children's progress and how to monitor teaching so that it makes an impact on children's learning. Trainees report that this experience makes a huge difference to their understanding of differentiation and meeting individual pupils' needs.

Primary trainees also spend two weeks undertaking school visits to broaden their understanding of schools in London, one in November and the other in February. Groups of trainees and tutors visit some of the primary partnership's schools to observe good practice in action in:

- the teaching of phonics
- writing development
- the teaching of geometry
- the use of differentiation in problem solving
- enquiry in science
- how teachers manage behaviour.

They then discuss what they have seen with the teacher they observed.

There are comparable arrangements in place for the Institute's primary PGCE and School Direct programmes. All trainees have to consider the challenges faced by the partnership's primary schools as part of their training. Trainees and NQTs report positively on a module that enables them to examine issues associated with access, expectation and socio-economic background that affect many primary schools in London. This includes topics such as:

- working class boys and their achievement
- support for inclusion and diversity
- the importance of developing a culture of perseverance while challenging an 'anti-school' sub-culture.

This work supports trainees' skills in planning and assessing pupils' progress and in evaluating the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. It also helps to develop their understanding of the context of London's educational settings and many of them choose to take up posts in schools in challenging socio-economic circumstances as a result.

The arrangements for the School Direct (salaried) trainees differ, but still focus on the importance of involving school-based colleagues in sharing good practice and bringing the challenges faced by some inner-city schools to the fore.

A training day is also provided that focuses on how special school practice can be brought into mainstream settings to support children's learning. This is a result of a strong School Direct (salaried) partnership with Swiss Cottage School, an outstanding school in Camden for children with complex learning difficulties, emotional, behavioural and communication difficulties. The training covers:

- behaviour management
- assessment
- meeting individual needs
- resourcing, including the use of additional adults to support learning.

This is followed up with sessions that consider 'inclusion' more widely and issues around 'closing the gap' and gender. School Direct (salaried) trainees also benefit

from the sharing of practice around areas such as 'wraparound' services and working with the wider community from partnership working with Lambeth Teaching School Alliance and the Brixton Learning Collaborative.

School-based colleagues are also involved in specialist forums, including a phonics advisory group that provides the chance to exchange ideas with university colleagues.

Further education partnership working

An important feature of the Institute's ITE in FE partnership is addressing the challenges of teaching in urban areas, where young people and adults often have low achievement and face multiple barriers to learning.

Full-time and part-time programmes make use of training classes and vocational placements. Trainees spend six months in a training class before starting their placement. Training classes are:

- run in partner colleges
- led by highly experienced and qualified advanced practitioners
- directed by a lead tutor who takes responsibility for both a class of learners in the relevant subject and a group of between three and six trainees, who participate in teaching the class, under the lead tutor's guidance
- followed up with detailed peer and tutor feedback discussions.

This model of teacher development, rooted firmly in the colleges where the trainees will continue their careers, provides a highly effective teacher training programme.

Training is provided by staff from the university and features specialist inputs from senior managers in the partnership's provider organisations. The training also includes specific support in job-searching and in developing trainees' academic writing.

As with the primary and secondary partnerships, trainees have access to extensive library facilities and are invited to attend numerous open seminars, talks and conferences on a wide range of educational topics.

Conclusion

A focus on deep mutual commitment, working together in partnership and a shared understanding of the challenges that face schools and settings in their ITE partnerships ensure that trainees are grounded in and very well-prepared for working in schools in challenging circumstances in an urban context.

NQTs and former trainees in FE and skills play an active role in improving access and achievement for all pupils and learners in the educational settings in which they work.

The good practice case studies that Ofsted publishes highlight specific examples of practice that providers of education, learning and children's services have used to achieve successful outcomes.

For education, the case studies do not recommend a single particular approach to teaching and learning. Ofsted has no preferred lesson structure or teaching style. We showcase and share a wide range of approaches that providers have found work well for them in achieving good outcomes for children, young people and learners.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Complete our survey [here](#).

Click [here](#) to see other good practice examples.

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