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Research and analysis

Initial teacher education thematic monitoring visits: overview report

Published 1 October 2025

Applies to England

Background and context

In November 2024, the Secretary of State for Education asked us to delay the next cycle of routine initial teacher education (ITE) inspections until the academic year 2025/26. In the interim, we were asked to carry out assurance activity. This took the form of thematic monitoring visits (TMVs) to 78 providers. A full list of the providers we visited is in Annex A.

The TMVs were the first activity we had carried out since implementation of the Initial Teacher Training statutory guidance (published after the Department for Education's market review), which came into effect in September 2024 for the primary and secondary phases. September 2024 also saw the start of the diploma in teaching (DiT) (further education and skills) framework for the further education (FE) and skills phase of ITE.

The TMV themes were designed to provide an insight into how ITE providers are implementing the changes to each age phase of ITE provision and the matters we identified as pertinent for providers of the different phases of ITE. The themes for each ITE phase are listed in Annex B.

During the spring and summer terms of the academic year 2024/25, inspectors visited the 78 ITE providers to gather evidence on the identified themes. The providers selected to receive a TMV varied in designation, size, structure and experience of ITE inspection. Some providers deliver single age phases of ITE; others deliver multiple phases. The sample included ITE providers who had not previously been inspected.

The findings from each phase of the TMVs are outlined under the theme titles used to shape the visits, grouped according to age phase. The report also includes summaries of additional discussions that inspectors held about the recruitment and retention of trainee teachers. At the end of the main text of this document, a series of conclusions sums up the key findings from the visits.

Methodology

We structured each TMV according to the scale of the provision at the provider. A separate team of inspectors gathered evidence for each phase of ITE offered.

The visits were planned to reduce the burden on providers. For example, we gave longer notice periods than the three working days normally given for inspections, and we only asked for information necessary for planning the TMV. Lead inspectors worked collaboratively with provider leaders to choose the partners, early years settings, schools and FE and skills providers to be visited during the TMV.

Inspectors used a range of established activities to gather evidence relating to the themes. Examples of these activities included:

- discussions with leaders, mentors and teacher educators
- visits to training being attended by trainees
- visits to lead partners and partner colleges
- visits to trainees on their placement/in their workplace
- reviews of trainees' work and portfolios

The visits lasted for 3 days and combined in-person and remote activities.

Main findings

Early years phase ITE

Inspectors visited 5 providers with programmes leading to the award of early years teacher status. These providers offer both graduate entry and graduate employment-based routes into teaching. As part of their training, all early years trainees must have a main placement and a shorter 'contrasting placement' in a setting that offers a different environment and experience from the main placement. The early years phase has the smallest number of providers by a significant margin. All the providers also offer other phases of ITE.

Theme 1: How successful are the arrangements made by providers for their trainees to receive high-quality mentoring?

Typically, leaders set clear expectations for mentoring from the start of the programmes. They recognise that high-quality mentoring has a direct impact on trainees' progress and development.

Although it is not a statutory requirement in ITE for early years, some of the providers have set up mentor leadership structures, similar to the statutory requirements for programmes that result in qualified teacher status (QTS). For example, they employ 'lead mentors' or 'external mentors' to offer additional layers of quality assurance of mentoring. These individuals often act as a conduit between provider leaders and mentors in the early years settings. They offer effective, individualised support where needed, as well as dealing with any gaps in the knowledge and expertise of setting-based mentors who have not completed teacher training themselves. In some cases, former trainees take on the role of mentor for current trainees.

One of the challenges facing providers of ITE for the early years phase is finding mentors with sufficient expertise. For example, some mentors told inspectors that they do not feel skilled enough to carry out observations in phonics, having never been taught this topic themselves. In some early years settings, it can also be difficult to identify suitably qualified staff to act as mentors, because not all have teaching qualifications. There are

examples of trainees being mentored by setting staff who are not familiar with the research and theories that the trainees learn about in their training. In these situations, most provider leaders implement flexible mentoring programmes to ensure that trainees receive the support they need to improve their teaching. Programme staff and/or lead mentors offer support where needed, as well as helping to fill any gaps in the trainees' knowledge and expertise.

Provider leaders strongly encourage mentors to attend relevant training. They take a flexible approach to providing training for mentors, to make it as easy as possible for them to attend. In some cases, this involves training on a one-to-one basis. The challenges with mentor training are often compounded in the contrasting placements. Trainees are only in these settings for a short amount of time, and the setting leaders do not always give mentoring the same high priority as they do in the trainees' main placements.

Some settings are reluctant to release staff to act and train as mentors because of ratio requirements. To mitigate the difficulties caused by this, many providers deliver at least some mentor training online. Providers also repeat live training sessions at different times of the day and provide pre-recorded training. Where useful or possible, they pass on the information through newsletters and planned keeping-in-touch meetings. However, too many mentors still find it difficult to attend the required training.

The difficulties presented by ratio requirements are compounded by funding difficulties. Some settings are not able to use grant funding to support mentoring for their trainees in the way the DfE intended the money to be used. This is especially the case in nursery and pre-school settings that are not part of a maintained school or academy. This sometimes results in the mentoring taking place outside of work hours, which relies on the goodwill of staff.

Inspectors found examples of mentors attending trainee

induction sessions to learn more about the ITE programme, as well as attending mentor training. Where this happens, both the trainees and the mentors are very positive about the benefits of working together from this early stage.

Provider leaders supplement mentors' training with informative handbooks to make sure that they understand systems and processes. For example, leaders clearly define expectations for observations and what they expect from the weekly mentor meetings. The leaders also provide additional self-study modules, but they told inspectors that the completion rate of these is often low.

In most providers visited, mentoring in the 'home' settings is high quality. This is because the providers have developed strong relationships with the setting leaders and mentors over time. They work together effectively in the best interests of trainees.

Provider leaders have put in place suitable quality assurance processes to give them oversight of the mentoring that trainees receive. In most cases, this shows mentoring practice that aligns with the expectations of leaders. In some providers, mentors upload their records of observations and notes of mentoring meetings to a shared access system. Leaders then complete timely checks on the information provided. Where this does not meet expectations, personal tutors intervene to support the required professional dialogue between the trainee and their mentor.

Generally, mentors benefit from constructive joint observations with the provider's staff. They commented on how this helps them to improve their own practice. In some providers, mentors receive constructive feedback on their mentoring. Where this happens mentors highly value this investment in their professional development. However, some new mentors commented that they would have preferred an earlier visit from the provider's staff to make sure they were doing the right things for the trainee from the outset.

The vast majority of trainees are positive about how mentoring enriches their learning and teaching skills. They appreciate the support they receive from their mentors, which helps them to put the theory they learn into practice. Trainees like the way that mentors provide practical advice and value having a critical friend.

Theme 2: How well do providers prepare trainees to teach children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and to carry out their future roles and responsibilities in the early identification of SEND?

In most of the providers we visited, trainees start learning about SEND from the beginning of their programme. The approach to covering SEND in the ITE curriculum varies slightly between providers, but it is generally comprehensive and woven through the content of most, if not all, modules and/or training days.

Inspectors found that the curriculum is carefully sequenced so that the trainees can build a deep knowledge over time. Teacher educators supplement this training with relevant self-study materials and recommended reading. Some providers use external experts to inform and support the teaching of SEND on their ITE programmes, including from specialist national organisations. Trainees quickly become alert to the subtle ways that children's development might differ from what is typically expected.

Trainees routinely learn about key aspects of supporting children with SEND. For example, they learn about the 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years', including the 4 broad areas of need, the 'assess, plan, do and review' cycle of support, and working with others to provide interventions. Some providers focus closely on speech, language and communication difficulties, which gives trainees a detailed knowledge of interventions, communication methods and structured play. In many providers, teacher educators ensure that their trainees know that adaptive teaching is about more than supporting children with SEND.

Leaders ensure that the training on SEND is underpinned by relevant and high-quality research. They often use government guidance and Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) resources to complement the research. This helps trainees to understand the 'why' behind proven methods. Increasingly, trainees see how research changes over time and the importance of being critically reflective.

Some providers aim to understand what trainees already know about SEND at the start of the programme. For example, trainees complete an initial assessment, with a specific section on their SEND knowledge and expertise. Teacher educators and mentors use this to tailor training to the needs of individual trainees.

Many trainees benefit from visiting specialist settings, or mainstream settings with high proportions of children with SEND, as part of their programme. This is most successful when leaders plan tasks and reading to be completed before the visit to help trainees to think about SEND in deliberate ways during the visits. For example, trainees might be directed to observe the children so that they can identify adaptations, understand how support is structured and review the use of resources to support children with their needs. Trainees value the opportunities they get to talk with other trainees about supporting children with SEND, because this helps them to reflect on what they do and to identify good practice.

Teacher educators and mentors review what trainees know and can do in several ways. In many providers, trainees routinely receive feedback on their work with children with SEND following observations and are required to include this in their reflections. Discussions about children with SEND are also a requirement of weekly mentor meetings. Teacher educators set assignment tasks related to SEND to ensure that the trainees are deepening their knowledge over time.

On the whole, provider leaders offer helpful training to their staff and to mentors on supporting children with SEND. This is to

ensure that the mentors all understand the relevant research and their role in developing trainees' understanding of this important area of the curriculum. However, in a small minority of cases, mentors feel they do not know enough about SEND, and this means they are less able to support trainees in putting their theoretical knowledge into practice.

Across the providers we visited, trainees are generally well prepared to teach and support children with SEND. They understand not to make assumptions, but to explore behaviours and characteristics that may indicate possible barriers to learning. By the end of their programmes, trainees understand the importance of getting to know children well, the key role that parents and carers play and the role of external professionals. Inspectors found positive examples of trainees applying their learning in the workplace. For example, trainees' expert learning on speech, language and communication needs successfully informs their use of targeted techniques in their settings.

Theme 3: How effective is the ITE curriculum in developing trainees' understanding of the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework?

All the providers we visited have designed their curriculum to develop trainees' knowledge and understanding of the EYFS statutory framework. In doing this, they generally make use of the non-statutory guidance 'Development Matters' and the research that underpins it. Some leaders prioritise the prime areas of learning and development and teach those areas first or early in the curriculum. Others choose to thread them through the curriculum. Despite these differences, all providers put communication and language development at the heart of their curriculum. Teacher educators train on this through face-to-face and online sessions, as well as providing opportunities for self-study.

Many leaders plan their curriculum to mirror the areas of learning and development in the EYFS statutory framework. They revisit

key concepts to deepen trainees' knowledge and understanding over time, building complexity as they go. In most providers, the key elements of communication, namely 'listening, attention and understanding' and 'speaking' were typically broken down into smaller steps of learning, and sequenced logically to help trainees to understand them and make progress.

Leaders and teacher educators include the essential foundations of rhyme, song, storytelling, aural awareness and articulation in their ITE curriculum, paving the way for phonics. In most providers, trainees are supported well to develop their understanding, from early communication with babies through to teaching of phonics in the Reception Year. Some teacher educators seamlessly link communication and language development to other areas of the taught curriculum, such as exploring common barriers that might indicate that a child has speech, language and communication needs. For example, they help trainees to discern how communication and language needs can make it difficult for some children to learn the sounds that letters represent.

Inspectors found that trainees have frequent and meaningful opportunities to apply their learning. Teacher educators give trainees useful developmental tasks to carry out in their setting. For example, trainees might complete a task to track specific children at various stages of development through observations and interactions. They get feedback on their work from trainers and mentors through observations and are required to reflect on the guidance they receive. Many trainees have opportunities to visit other settings to gain vital knowledge and experience of communication and language development in children under 2 years old. Other trainees complete specific projects in their setting to apply what they know about children's learning and development.

In most providers, mentors receive useful training and guidance that helps them to support trainees in applying their learning. However, some mentors find that they do not have enough time to access the training and research materials available in these

areas. Inspectors found that mentors help trainees to plan their teaching and, in most cases, provide useful feedback from teaching observations. In most providers, feedback is linked to communication and language. Generally, trainees get relevant feedback, including how they could make better use of adult interactions. On a minority of occasions, the targets mentors set for trainees do not make it clear how the trainee could improve their teaching practice.

Most leaders find that many of their trainees begin their ITE programmes with an understanding of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS statutory framework. This is because the trainees are already employed in the setting where they are training to teach. However, leaders do not assume that this will always be the case. Generally, leaders take the time to understand trainees' prior knowledge and build successfully on their starting points. Some leaders used the trainees' initial self-assessments to ensure that their knowledge of childhood development, including communication and language, are up to date.

Trainees are clear about their role and are well equipped to apply their learning about communication and language to their teaching. They value the helpful examples their teacher educators share with them. These include, for example, high-quality recordings that show the different stages of communication from babies babbling to saying their first words. The assignments and lesson plans produced by trainees show high levels of expertise that they are able to apply to children in different age groups.

The recruitment and retention of trainees in the early years phase

Most providers of ITE for the early years phase have only a small number of places available on programmes that lead to early years teacher status. Some provider leaders said that they were oversubscribed each year, while others do not always fill their quota of places. Inspectors heard examples of long-

standing and highly effective partnerships with early years settings having a positive impact on trainee recruitment.

Some provider leaders reported instances of applicants being confused about the different qualifications available for working in the early years sector. Leaders identified this as a possible barrier to recruitment.

Provider leaders are not concerned about the retention of trainees on their early years ITE programmes. The reasons they give for this include rigorous recruitment practices and the fact that many trainees are already employed in early years settings before beginning their training.

Primary phase ITE

Inspectors gathered evidence from the primary phase in 27 ITE providers. This included both school-centred initial teacher training providers (SCITTs) and higher education institutions (HEIs). Inspectors visited providers that offer primary ITE as a single phase, as well as those with multi-phase provision. They also visited an additional 18 providers and collected evidence from the primary and secondary phases on a combined basis.

Theme 1: How successful have providers been in implementing intensive training and practice (ITAP) within their primary ITE programmes?

Most of the primary providers we visited have a clear rationale for the ITAP topics they have chosen. Leaders use a range of approaches to identify specific topics for the trainees to focus on. They consider topics that trainees struggle to master at different stages of the ITE programme, along with those they think will help the trainees most during their early career teacher (ECT) years. In some cases, leaders consult with external stakeholders and experts to help them choose ITAP topics. For example, some leaders select phonics for one of their ITAP

topics, because of the challenges local schools face with this. However, there is some variability in the extent to which lead partners are included in the decision-making about ITAPs.

In the primary phase providers we visited, trainees benefit from ITAPs that cover a wide range of focus areas. The most frequently occurring were focus areas relating to behaviour, phonics, adaptive teaching and assessment. Some leaders commented on the challenges they face in finding the right balance between ensuring topics are covered in granular detail but not going so far as to be restrictive. Leaders take different approaches to titling their ITAPs. Some leaders are more explicit than others, with titles such as 'guides and scaffolds for pupils with SEND'.

Trainees spoke very highly of their ITAP experiences. They value the opportunity to observe staff in schools because it enables them to see how the theory they learn translates into everyday practice. This helps them to model this practice in their own teaching. Trainees also value opportunities to take part in training activities, such as supported model classes. For example, trainees complete two days of university training focused on teaching reading and then practise what they have learned by teaching reading to a class of pupils brought into the provider setting. Leaders identify improvements in trainees' teaching skills. For example, they noted fewer behaviour-related targets in the spring term because trainees had become more skilful in this aspect of their teaching.

Generally, ITAP experiences are planned to align with the content covered in the centre-based training. In some cases, leaders have made changes to modules to ensure that trainees have the prior knowledge they need for their ITAP experience to be as successful as possible. It is common practice for ITAP experiences that focus on routines to take place early in the programme or even before the start of the academic year. Further examples of alignment include leaders scheduling an ITAP on the topic of retrieval at a time when trainees are learning about assessment. There are positive examples of providers

linking the ITAP to the subject being taught at the time. For example, inspectors saw an example of an ITAP on modelling being applied to the teaching of mathematics and physical education.

Although many ITAPs are carried out within a week, this is not the case for all. Leaders in some providers have spread the intensive study over a longer period. For example, some trainees take part in a series of immersive days that are organised into focus areas. The days take place throughout the year.

Leaders also take different approaches to the timing of their ITAPs. Some schedule more ITAPs at the beginning of the academic year and others space them out. In most cases, leaders consider the best time for trainees to see particular practices, the pre-requisite learning, and the impact on any schools being visited. Others highlight the challenges in finding a balance between aligning ITAPs with the broader curriculum and not having all of them too close together, creating a disjointed placement experience for the trainees. Some leaders identified that the first week of a term is not the ideal time for an ITAP.

The most commonly cited challenges with ITAPs in the primary phase are logistics and balance. These include ensuring that ITAPs align with the key stage that trainees are focusing on. For example, trainees on a key stage 1 placement benefit from significantly more opportunities to teach phonics.

Leaders select the required experts from a number of sources, for example from within the provider and the partnership, from the local authority and from the broader ITE sector. Leaders in some providers are drawing experts from a broader range of sources, as their ITAPs become more embedded. However, in a small number of cases where trainees observed staff in their placement school, the trainees questioned the expertise of those they were observing.

Leaders continue to reflect on the fit of ITAPs within their ITE

curriculum, learning lessons from the feedback they collect. For example, in some providers, leaders have introduced or changed workbooks and/or activities to give more structure to trainees' learning. In others, leaders now do more to identify what trainees know at the start of the ITAP so that they can decide on the most appropriate experts for the trainees to observe. Many leaders acknowledge that there is still more to do to refine the ITAP experience for trainees. They plan to carry out more quality assurance to identify potential improvements.

Communication across the partnership, as well as with those involved in the ITAP, can make a significant difference to the ITAP's success. In many cases, lead mentors and staff in partner schools feel they have made a meaningful contribution to the design and timing of the ITAPs. However, this is not the case in all providers. Some school-based mentors do not know what their trainees will be doing on the ITAP, which means that their trainees do not experience the full range of planned activities. For example, these trainees will not be able to observe the topic in question in their placement school during the ITAP period.

Theme 2: How successful are the arrangements that providers implement to ensure that all trainees benefit from the high-quality mentoring that they are entitled to?

In almost all of the providers visited, leaders make effective arrangements to ensure that mentoring complies with the DfE's initial teacher training criteria and supporting advice. They ensure that mentors benefit from a well-structured training curriculum. They give mentors clear information that sets out what they are expected to do each week. Inspectors found examples of leaders inviting all mentors to take part in an initial conference designed to set expectations and share information about the ITE curriculum, including ITAPs.

The training of mentors is generally effective across the primary phase. During the visits, inspectors found many examples of positive practice in this area. The approach taken by providers

varies. Some offer 2-hour training sessions at relevant times of the year; others provide a varied programme of conferences and online sessions. Leaders in many providers draw on research and/or resources from sector bodies to inform, complement or form part of their mentor training curriculum. However, in a very small number of providers, inspectors found that mentors do not have the same high levels of understanding of the ITE curriculum as those in other providers.

Inspectors found positive examples of providers working collaboratively with their partner schools to design their mentor training. For example, some mentors receive training with elements specific to their school and trainee. Additionally, some providers introduce subject-specific teacher educators who deliver aspects of the mentor training. This is already having a positive impact on mentors, who can then develop their own subject-specific knowledge.

Many leaders provide training that is tailored to the needs of individual mentors. They identify what mentors already know and can do, to improve the training mentors receive. In some cases, this is as simple as exempting experienced mentors from the first module of the mentor training or grouping new mentors together. In others, there is a bespoke training plan for each mentor. Generally, mentors speak positively about the training they receive. In addition to their training, mentors often receive useful links and resources to help with the support they give to trainees. For example, mentors receive regular communications, such as weekly topic videos or links to the 'theory of the month'.

Leaders in many providers carefully consider mentors' workload and any practical barriers that might prevent them from completing the required training. They try different approaches and combinations of face-to-face and online training. Useful examples of this include a provider repeating the initial mentor training throughout the year so that mentors who come in to replace others during the year can still receive training. Leaders know that meeting the preferences of all mentors is an unrealistic expectation, given that mentors have such different

preferences for how their training is to be delivered.

Some providers find it challenging to ensure that mentors attend training. Generally, leaders rigorously track the completion of training by mentors, but there are isolated examples where this tracking is not precise enough. Mentors identify time pressures and a lack of protected time away from their own classroom as reasons for not attending training. This is particularly the case in small primary schools. Some leaders adopt highly flexible approaches to providing mentor training. These include options to watch recorded training sessions and even one-to-one coaching.

Leaders use a wide range of quality assurance processes to support their oversight of mentoring. In some providers, the extent of their quality assurance of mentoring is risk-assessed to prioritise checks where they are needed most. This ranges from teacher educators checking the work of mentors when they review a trainee's file to the use of tracking systems to identify when tasks are not completed. In the strongest examples, oversight of mentoring resulted in swift interventions to support trainees to address weaknesses in their teaching practice. However, not all mentors know how their work is quality assured.

Generally, leaders implement effective plans for lead mentors across the primary provision. In most providers, there are clearly defined roles for the lead mentors. Provider leaders carefully consider who should take on the role of a lead mentor to minimise the burden on their partners and to achieve high standards of mentoring.

Lead mentors are providing an additional layer of support and, in some cases, challenge for mentors. However, the lead mentor role is still new, and in some cases the interaction between the lead mentors and others involved in supporting the trainees is not yet fully understood. It was clear to inspectors that lead mentors are carrying out a range of tasks, including training mentors, carrying out joint observations, and quality assurance. Examples of their impact included lead mentoring resulting in

additional support for mentors, and improved targets being set for trainees.

Generally, mentors value the communication with the provider's staff. They describe how they can quickly deal with any problems they might have and easily raise concerns about trainees. In providers where mentors receive constructive feedback on their work, they value this. However, not all mentors receive this. For example, some mentors upload the required paperwork and assume it has been reviewed, but they do not receive feedback as a matter of course.

Most trainees speak highly of the support they receive from their mentors. However, the experiences of trainees vary between the schools where they complete their placements. Some trainees on school-based programmes are less satisfied with the mentoring they receive on their second placement. Trainees say that mentors help them to extend their learning and even describe their mentor as providing 'the golden thread'. The early career teachers (ECTs) spoken to by inspectors said that their mentors helped them with their transition from trainee to teacher.

One of the key challenges faced by provider leaders is the capacity for mentoring within schools. This is a problem felt more strongly in smaller primary schools. Leaders said that the implications of this include a high turnover of mentors and some schools even being reluctant to take on trainees.

Theme 3: How well do providers prepare trainees to teach pupils with SEND?

SEND features prominently in the ITE curriculums and is covered comprehensively, although the approaches taken by leaders do vary. While most ITE curriculums cover what they are required to by the core content framework (CCF), some leaders are already reflecting the new initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF) in their curriculum. In many providers, training on supporting pupils with SEND is woven through the ITE curriculum. For example, there is often a

requirement for trainees to consider pupils with SEND in all subject sessions. When learning about phonics, some trainees consider speech and communication barriers that pupils with SEND might face.

Some providers deal with specific aspects of SEND early in their ITE curriculum to underpin later learning. In many providers, the logical sequencing of SEND training in the ITE curriculum means that trainees can revisit particular topics and deepen their knowledge over time. For example, trainees might start by learning how to adapt behaviour management for pupils with SEND. They would then build their expertise towards understanding the work of others and the role of education, health and care (EHC) plans. Inspectors saw examples of specialist lectures on topics such as adaptive teaching and the role of the SEND coordinator (SENDCo), and the use of specialists in particular areas of need delivering guest lectures.

Generally, leaders plan for trainees to be able to put into practice what they have learned. In some providers, staff have particularly effective conversations with staff in the placement schools to ensure that the placement is as beneficial as it can be in helping the trainee to develop their confidence and competence in teaching pupils with SEND. However, in a small number of cases the timing of activities is not as well aligned with other topics as leaders would like. The opportunities for trainees to put into practice what they have learned about SEND varies between the individual placement schools.

Inspectors saw several examples of highly effective practice during trainees' placements. These included mentors talking to trainees about pupils with SEND as a matter of routine in their weekly mentor meetings. Other examples included clear feedback on adaptive teaching in observation forms and a requirement for trainees to include the teaching of pupils with SEND in all their reflections.

Leaders in some providers enable trainees to complete part of their placement in a specialist setting. For the most part, this

works well. However, there are examples of trainees struggling to contextualise what they have learned because of the stark difference between the pupils with SEND in their main placement school and those in the specialist setting.

Leaders in some providers have chosen to include an ITAP covering adaptive teaching. During the visits, inspectors saw examples of trainees considering the needs of pupils with SEND in other ITAPs. This included trainees considering the adjustments that might be needed for individual pupils during ITAPs on behaviour. In some providers, trainees benefit from visits to specialist settings as part of their SEND ITAP.

Leaders in most providers use research well to inform their training on supporting pupils with SEND. The EEF research is often used as a starting point. Teacher educators signpost trainees to use publications that are specific to their location to better understand the local offer of support for pupils.

Although inspectors saw many strong examples of SEND in the ITE curriculum, there are a small number of trainees whose knowledge and understanding of SEND lacks depth. This is because some elements of the training on SEND are not precise enough or are not connected to other teaching. In other cases, there are not enough checks on what trainees have learned, or some SEND-related topics are not covered until quite late in the ITE curriculum. These things limit trainees' recall of what they have been trained in and their confidence in the classroom.

In some providers, leaders bring in experts with particular expertise and experience in working with pupils with SEND to deliver training. Inspectors saw some strong examples of this training for staff and/or mentors. In one example, mentors attended a training session just before the SEND ITAP, to provide them with the knowledge they needed to support trainees during the ITAP. However, some of the training on SEND relies on mentors downloading and reading materials. Although this creates flexibility, a small number of mentors said

that they do not have time to do this. In many providers, training on SEND is supplemented by useful information in handbooks and weekly newsletters. Leaders continue to reflect on their mentor training and the most effective ways of providing mentors with the knowledge they need to carry out the role well.

Most trainees find the training they receive on teaching pupils with SEND to be useful. However, a few trainees said that they would like to see more in the way of practical strategies for supporting pupils with SEND. There are situations where mentors think that their trainees can do more than the trainees themselves believe they can. The ECTs that inspectors spoke to said that they felt well prepared to teach pupils with SEND.

Secondary phase ITE

Inspectors gathered evidence from the secondary phase in 27 ITE providers. This included SCITTs and HEIs. They visited providers that only offered the secondary phase of ITE and providers that offered multi-phase provision. As with the findings for the primary phase, the findings from these providers were supplemented by findings from the 18 providers visited by inspectors considering the primary and secondary phases on a combined basis.

Theme 1: How successful have providers been in implementing intensive training and practice (ITAP) within their secondary ITE programmes?

As in the primary phase, leaders generally have a clear rationale for their choices of ITAP focus areas, and these decisions are based on sound principles. Many leaders collaborate with others to inform their choice of ITAPs. The most common ITAP focus areas are linked to behaviour and/or routines. Other popular choices include adaptive teaching, assessment/questioning and planning. One of the challenges faced by leaders is finding the right level of detail and depth for the focus area while not

overwhelming trainees. Some appear to follow a broad rather than a detailed approach. For example, some ITAPs are simply titled 'inclusion' or 'pedagogies', which suggests a lack of specificity. In other cases, the content is more granular than the title suggests it might be.

Most leaders carefully consider the timing and sequencing of the ITAPs. For example, ITAPs that focus on routines and planning tend to be at the start of the academic year, while ITAPs with assessment as the focus area tend to come later in the programme. Inspectors saw many positive examples of well-sequenced ITAPs in the ITE curriculum. Leaders ensure that trainees have the knowledge they need to access the ITAP learning. They provide meaningful opportunities for trainees to revisit that learning throughout the programme. Many leaders spoke about deliberate strategies for overlearning in these pivotal aspects of the curriculum.

Leaders in some providers schedule all the ITAPs as early as possible, or even before the start of the school year, to give trainees a sound research-informed grounding in these topics before they start teaching. In other providers, ITAPs are deliberately placed later in the year so that trainees have time to learn the pre-requisite knowledge. One of the lessons learned by a few providers was not to have ITAPs at the same time as the start of a placement, as this can be too disruptive for the trainee and the placement school.

The duration of individual ITAPs varies across secondary phase ITE provision. Many leaders choose to deliver some or all of their ITAPs in a 5-day period. Some providers take a varied approach, with ITAPs being spread over a longer period. Others spread the ITAP over 2 weeks, having a series of immersive days clustered into ITAP focus areas or having more than one ITAP at the same time.

Many provider leaders make effective use of the expertise from within the partnership to inform and deliver their ITAPs. For example, training is provided by behaviour leads from teaching

school hubs and leaders from multi-academy trusts that include specialist provision for pupils with SEND. Other leaders bring in expertise from outside the partnership.

The most common approach to subject specificity in the secondary ITAPs is to start with general principles before considering how to apply them in a subject-specific context. This includes delivery by subject tutors, trainees observing teaching being done by others in their own subject area, and feedback from subject tutors and mentors. An alternative approach is to provide ITAPs in subject groups. One of the challenges identified by trainees and provider leaders is how to maintain consistency across the different subject areas. On occasion, this includes leaders making specific arrangements in schools to ensure that the trainees have appropriate opportunities to observe experienced teachers. Some provider leaders recognise the need for more quality assurance of ITAPs to minimise inconsistency in the future.

Leaders continue to reflect on the success of ITAPs and consider what they can do to improve them. Many have implemented learning from the pilot ITAPs carried out last year. This includes producing more detailed guidance notes and alternative approaches to observing expert teachers. In providers that rely on placement schools to support them with the ITAPs, some leaders plan to make their expectations clearer and to increase their oversight of the trainees' experience. This includes oversight of ITAPs delivered through lead partners, as some leaders have identified this as another area where practice is inconsistent.

The most cited challenge was the demand ITAPs place on time, particularly when placement schools are used for the observations. This is compounded in schools that have trainee teachers from more than one ITE provider. Some leaders collaborate well with leaders in other local ITE providers to minimise the combined impact of ITAPs on the placement schools.

Another challenge identified by provider leaders is the lack of expertise among staff in some placement schools. Mentor training is well timed to take place before the individual ITAPs, but this does not always fill the mentors' knowledge gaps.

Trainees speak very highly of the learning and teaching skills they have developed from completing ITAPs. They like the granular nature of what they learn and comment on how it helps them to refine their teaching. The trainees who are able to visit different schools for their ITAP value the opportunity to broaden their experience. Mentors highlight the positive impact of ITAPs on trainees' pedagogical content knowledge. For example, mentors said that supporting their trainee on an ITAP with 'scaffolding' as the focus area helped them to improve their own practice.

Theme 2: How successful are the arrangements that providers implement to ensure that all trainees benefit from the high-quality mentoring that they are entitled to?

Leaders set clear expectations for mentoring, which they communicate well to mentors. In most cases, mentors receive a useful handbook that makes their role clear. Provider leaders typically supplement the handbook with meetings with school leaders. Examples include mentors receiving a carefully constructed person specification that sets out the role and the requirements to be appointed to it. Some provider leaders feel that the fact that mentors are recruited and managed by the schools creates difficulties when things do not go as well as they expect them to.

A further challenge identified by provider leaders is the recruitment of subject mentors for trainees preparing to teach shortage subjects or subjects with typically small teams in schools. In these small departments, it is even more challenging for the mentor to take time out for training. Inspectors found examples of one-to-one training in situations like this and/or examples where there had been a change of mentor. In a small number of providers who offer ITE in shortage subject areas,

trainees are mentored by non-subject specialists. Leaders in these providers ensure that the trainees receive additional subject support and guidance from teacher educators.

Many leaders use resources and research on effective mentoring produced by sector bodies to inform their mentor training curriculum. Inspectors saw examples where leaders have identified the need for training on 'expert and novice' mentoring, as opposed to peer-to-peer mentoring. However, in other providers, mentors feel there could be a better balance between training on mentoring and on the ITE curriculum for their subject. Occasionally, this imbalance results in the trainee having to explain the ITE curriculum to their subject mentor. In some providers, mentor training is broken down into subject groups to provide greater specificity for the subject mentors. In most others, the interplay between general and subject-specific pedagogies is recognised.

Inspectors found examples of mentor training being delivered in pathways that recognise the experience of mentors. In some providers, mentors have to complete a self-assessment of their knowledge and skills to inform the pathway they should follow. Leaders acknowledge that sometimes the results of this can be skewed by the mentor's perception of their own knowledge. Successful examples of additional support for new mentors include leaders setting up a buddy system so that new mentors can work with others who have more experience.

The tailoring of training extends to the conferences that some leaders provide. For example, the first day of the conference might only be for new mentors. Mentors speak highly of their learning from provider conferences, particularly when presenters share information about content from the ITE curriculum for trainees. However, when there are a number of mentors from the same school, it can be difficult for them all to be out of school at the same time to attend a conference.

Leaders continue to provide information to mentors in a variety of ways. Often, mentor training is supplemented by additional

training videos, weekly newsletters, and bulletins that inform mentors about what trainees are learning. Most mentors find this useful but, on occasion, newer mentors find it a lot to take in.

The extent to which secondary mentors are involved with ITAPs varies. Those mentors who play a part in ITAPs appreciate the time the provider staff spend in preparing them to support trainees, and the resources they have to help with this support. Some mentors could extend their role in particular ITAPs by contributing to the content. When mentors support trainees with their ITAP learning, their own training is often delivered just before the ITAP so that they know what is expected of them. There are a few mentors across the secondary phase who do not understand enough about the ITAPs their trainees undertake.

Mentors complete meeting notes and observation forms weekly. Most know that the provider staff will check to make sure these are complete and high quality. Mentors also value the opportunity for joint observations with provider staff to check the accuracy of their feedback to trainees. In the rare instances where mentors continue not to meet expectations, leaders intervene and work with the school to find a replacement. Many provider leaders have developed sophisticated systems to inform risk-based quality assurance. However, not all providers thoroughly check mentoring and there are examples of mentors not receiving feedback about the quality of their work. As a result, examples of inconsistent practice remain between subjects and/or schools. The most frequently identified improvement area for mentors is target-setting.

Some provider leaders make sure there is an appropriate balance between support and challenge. They make their expectations clear but ensure that mentors benefit from developmental feedback to help them to meet these expectations. For example, inspectors found examples of course tutors holding meetings with mentors to review their work and identify areas where it could be improved. Mentors in these providers describe the support they receive as empathetic.

Many provider leaders carefully consider their approach to lead mentors to ensure that the role will contribute effectively to ensuring high standards in mentoring. Some leaders take extra care to define the lead mentor role and set out how it differs from personal tutors. In smaller providers there could be just 1 or 2 lead mentors. In larger providers, the approach taken by leaders to arranging the caseload for lead mentors varies. Some do this in subject groups or by schools. In providers that cover a larger geographical area, the lead mentor might oversee mentors in a particular part of the country.

Inspectors saw examples of effective oversight of the groups of mentors that lead mentors are responsible for. This included lead mentors identifying inconsistencies in the approach to the weekly meetings with trainees and providing additional guidance to increase consistency.

Provider leaders recognise the importance of effective partnership working and goodwill, given that they have no direct control over the selection of or time allocated to mentors. Many leaders make the time commitment clear to school leaders in advance and check that this is understood and planned for in the mentors' timetables. Inspectors found positive examples of additional negotiation about mentors' time, to provide a smooth transition for trainees between placements. This included subject mentors from both schools completing a joint observation of the trainee teaching.

On the whole, trainees speak very highly of the support they receive from their mentors. Many describe their mentors as knowledgeable and highly supportive. Trainees know how to raise concerns with the providers' staff in the unlikely event that they have concerns about their mentor. However, there is still variability in the mentoring experience for trainees. This is often linked to the time mentors dedicate to supporting the trainee and/or the mentor's awareness of ITAPs.

Theme 3: How well do providers prepare trainees to teach pupils with SEND?

In almost all the secondary phase providers visited, the coverage of SEND was carefully considered and integrated well throughout the ITE curriculum.

The approach that leaders take to the training in supporting pupils with SEND varies. For example, in some providers, the curriculum includes well-sequenced, discrete training on SEND that culminates in an ITAP. Inspectors heard examples of trainees being encouraged to think about pupils with SEND before their programme starts, as it was part of the interview task, and about specific inclusion-themed conferences.

In some providers, training about SEND is grounded in the general pedagogy modules; in others, leaders take a more subject-specific approach. Examples of the subject-specific approach include trainees who are preparing to teach geography learning about how to support learners with SEND on a field trip. Some providers of multi-phase ITE take a productive cross-phase approach to sharing some of the research on SEND.

Some leaders commission those with expertise in SEND to inform, contribute to and review the coverage of SEND in the ITE curriculum. Others draw on expertise from within the partnership or form links with trusts that have specialist schools. Trainees who have sessions delivered by a SENDCo value the contextual understanding that this gives them.

In some HEIs, trainees benefit from hearing about dedicated research being carried out within the university itself. In others, leaders and teacher educators use EEF resources as a starting point. In almost all providers, high-quality research underpins the coverage of SEND in the ITE curriculum. However, in a very small number of providers, coverage or signposting of research beyond that carried out by the EEF is limited.

Leaders ensure that, within the ITE curriculum, trainees learn about and develop strategies to support pupils with a range of needs. Trainees learn about areas of need, including

neurodiversity, adaptive teaching and the role of the other agencies in providing support and EHC plans, as well as broader principles of inclusion.

Many trainees can visit alternative settings to broaden their experience of different pupil needs. Leaders in some providers identify specific times when all trainees spend time in specialist settings. However, the extent to which trainees can extend their practical experience of working with pupils with SEND varies between providers. In some cases, this relies solely on the breadth of the offer and quality of provision for pupils with SEND in their placement school.

Trainees value the additional tasks they are given to explore this important area from a practical perspective. In a few providers, trainees are tasked with shadowing pupils with SEND and/or staff in the placement provider who are providing support for pupils with SEND. Other trainees complete case studies to inform discussions about potential strategies for supporting pupils with SEND. Some trainees have placement activities linked to a meeting with the SENDCo and a review of the school SEND policy. However, small number of trainees said they would have benefited from learning more about practical strategies that they can apply in the classroom.

Leaders in a number of providers of secondary phase ITE have chosen SEND as one of their ITAP focus areas. There are many examples of SEND being a key feature of ITAPs that are not specifically dedicated to SEND as a focus area. However, inspectors found examples where the opportunity to observe experienced teachers supporting pupils with SEND is not just restricted to the ITAP. This helps the trainees to understand more about adaptive teaching and how to use it more effectively in their own practice.

Most mentors are clear about their role in helping trainees to develop their understanding of how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders in some providers make this explicit in their weekly communications with mentors. As a result, trainees generally

have useful discussions about SEND in their meetings with their mentor. Leaders apply a range of methods to update mentors on research relating to SEND and the content of the ITE curriculum. However, a few leaders recognise that there is more they could do to improve mentors' knowledge of this area.

On the whole, trainees feel that they are building skills that will equip them to support pupils with SEND as they move into being an ECT. However, a very small number of trainees do not have the same level of confidence in recognising the needs of their pupils or making adaptations to meet these needs. In these cases, the strategies identified on the trainees' lesson plans are generic rather than focused on individual needs.

Themes relating to primary and secondary phase ITE

Theme 1: How successful have providers been in implementing intensive training and practice (ITAP) within their primary and secondary ITE programmes?

The approaches taken by leaders to managing their ITE provision varies. Some manage the phases of their ITE separately, whereas others choose to manage the primary and secondary phases together. Leaders take a similar approach to planning ITAPs. It is clear how much planning has gone into implementing ITAPs in both phases. There are many examples of research-based approaches to planning ITAPs and sharing this research across provider networks.

Leaders in many providers work together to determine the approach and focus areas, which they then contextualise in the individual phases. Other providers do the planning in phases. Inspectors found a greater number of ITAPs focusing on behaviour and routines in the secondary phase, with phonics being a popular choice in the primary phase.

In most providers, leaders implement the same format and number of ITAPs in both phases, generally 4. However, leaders in a small number of providers opted for 5 ITAPs. Where leaders do choose the same focus areas for ITAPs in both the primary and secondary phases, the main difference is the subject specificity in the secondary phase. However, not all ITAPs have a subject focus.

In some providers, leaders recognise the need to differentiate their approach to better meet the needs of trainees who are following different routes into teaching. There are examples of leaders scheduling activities for apprentices in a different format than they do for trainees on other routes.

Where leaders have brought trainees together for some of the initial ITAP teaching, some have reported challenges with finding enough space or bringing people together in one location. For these reasons, some leaders chose to deliver some aspects of the ITAP online.

In their analysis of the impact of ITAP, some leaders have identified that the deep knowledge trainees develop helps to increase their confidence in their own teaching ability. For example, inspectors saw trainees carrying out an early ITAP on routines. As a result, they developed a more positive classroom presence, which they subsequently put to highly effective use when implementing strategies learned later in the programme. In the small number of cases where leaders plan ITAPs that are too broad or that lack clarity, trainees do not benefit from such deep learning.

Theme 2: How successful are the arrangements that providers implement to ensure that all trainees benefit from the high-quality mentoring that they are entitled to?

The clear expectations for mentors are a key feature of both the primary and secondary phases visited. For the most part, any variability in the quality of mentoring is within rather than between the primary and secondary phases. The challenges of capacity

in schools and the turnover of mentors feature in both phases, with the added complexity of subject-specific mentor considerations in the secondary phase. This is even more the case in the second placement schools.

In both phases, there are examples of inconsistency in the trainees' experience of mentoring. One of the more common areas where differences were seen was that of feedback and/target-setting in the weekly meetings. Other examples include mentors' awareness of the ITE curriculum. A very small number of mentors rely on asking their trainee what they have learned about particular topics.

Some provider leaders are concerned that the relaxation of the requirement for 20 hours of mentor training dilutes the importance of the role of the mentor and, on occasion, creates inconsistent messaging for schools. Others value the change and the flexibility that it brings, noting that it helps with the burden on schools. A number of leaders said that they now have to work harder with schools to find compromises that enable mentors to receive the training they need. In both phases there are highly positive examples of leaders having a firm commitment to the continuing professional development of mentors far beyond meeting the requirements of the DfE compliance criteria. Mentors and school leaders value this investment, commenting on the positive impact it has on school practices.

Theme 3: How well do providers prepare trainees to teach pupils with SEND?

Inspectors saw examples of providers offering specialist training in working with pupils with SEND. This specialist approach is offered by a very small number of providers, who would be identifiable because of their unique approach. Therefore, we have not included examples from this provision in the theme 3 findings in this report.

In the vast majority of the providers visited, the coverage of SEND in ITE is comprehensive and well-integrated. This applies

equally in both phases. In some providers, trainees in both phases benefit from specialist-led masterclasses. However, there are a very small number of examples of leaders not planning for the teaching of SEND well enough. Inspectors saw isolated examples of a fragmented approach, such as trainees moving too quickly from legislation to adaptive teaching. In these cases, trainees do not get the opportunity to revisit their learning and, therefore, are not as well prepared to teach pupils with SEND as those studying in other providers.

Mentors have variable levels of knowledge about the research and evidence that provider leaders use to underpin their coverage of SEND in the ITE curriculum. This is not phase-specific but a common theme across both phases. Many mentors value the training they receive on SEND, but there are a few mentors who would like more information about what their trainees are learning in this important area.

In both the primary and secondary phases, inspectors saw very positive examples of teacher educators supporting trainees to apply their knowledge of adaptive teaching to a specific primary subject or their specialist subject in secondary. However, there is some variability across secondary subjects, and a very small number of trainees say they would value more and/or earlier opportunities to experience working with pupils with SEND.

Theme 4: How effective have accredited providers been in developing partnerships and ensuring that they have sufficient oversight of the quality of education and training in their lead partners?

Due to the nature of theme 4 and the fact that it does not apply to many providers, we have presented the findings for this theme at a provider level rather than a phase level.

When we selected the providers to receive a TMV, we deliberately included SCITTs and HEIs that, as accredited providers, have formed partnerships containing lead partners.

It is evident from the providers visited that there are a variety of models in place between the accredited providers and their lead partners. This is often dictated by the reason for establishing the partnership. The number of lead partners working with the accredited providers ranges from 1 to 42. In some cases, the lead partners work in just one phase, while other partners operate in both. Not all provider leaders adopt the same approach to working with lead partners in their primary and secondary phases.

Some lead partners do not have any direct responsibility for trainees. Their role is to provide support to the accredited provider. For example, in one case, the lead partners deliver ITAPs aligned with their specialisms in behaviour and systematic synthetic phonics. Other accredited providers have taken the market reforms as an opportunity to expand their provision through relationships with lead partners. Reasons for the expansion include being able to support the recruitment of trainees in areas with historical low numbers and to enhance subject specialisms with low numbers of trainees, such as art.

Some accredited providers have developed a whole new delivery model of partner SCITTs in response to the market review, while others have simply expanded and formalised their relationships with existing partners. Some accredited providers have chosen to work with just one lead partner who was unsuccessful in the initial accreditation round. It is clear that some accredited providers expect their lead partner relationships to be temporary, particularly after it was announced that a new accreditation round will be held for applicants that were previously unsuccessful.

Leaders in the accredited providers are accountable for the curriculum in the lead partners. They take different approaches to the way they go about this. A few leaders require their lead partners to follow a centrally devised curriculum. Other accredited provider leaders take a more collaborative approach to curriculum design. They allow their lead partners more autonomy over the development of their own ITE curriculum,

albeit with clear expectations. In these cases, the accredited provider leaders then verify that the ITE curriculum in the lead partners meets those expectation.

Leaders in accredited providers have established formal partnership agreements that make their expectations clear. This includes 'non-negotiable' aspects of the curriculum and arrangements for quality assurance. Leaders in the lead partners are generally positive about the arrangements and consider their role in the partnership to be clear. Some leaders in lead partners spoke about how working with the accredited provider had helped them to improve their curriculum. Inspectors found examples of leaders in lead partners playing a key role in the governance of the accredited provider. This includes providing support and challenge for the leaders in the accredited provider who are responsible for the ITE curriculum.

The arrangements for quality assurance generally reflect the nature and size of the partnership. In many cases, the approach also reflects the stage in the relationship, with the nature of the oversight changing over time as mutual trust and confidence is established. For example, lead partners might now quality assure their own ITAP delivery and then report this to the accredited provider in order to satisfy the accountability requirements.

The benefits realised from lead partnership arrangements include shared resources, partners attending specialist training, growth in trainee numbers and access to specific expertise, such as in SEND. Some leaders in lead partners told inspectors that aligning their models with those of the accredited provider has been challenging. Some attribute this to the time available to get all of the required arrangements in place.

The recruitment and retention of trainees in the primary and secondary phases

The discussions with provider leaders about the recruitment of trainees indicate that the profile of applicants is changing. Some

leaders report that their applicants are becoming more diverse, including those from different backgrounds and older individuals seeking a career change. However, some of this varies according to the location of the provider. Leaders in providers that are in more rural and/or less diverse communities described more challenges in recruiting a diverse cohort. They also said that poor transport links are a barrier for some applicants who do not drive.

Location is becoming a bigger factor in applicants' decision-making. In some cases, this is linked to transport, as highlighted above. However, leaders explained that some trainees now look for ITE programmes that are nearer to their family, as they cannot afford accommodation.

Leaders said that they use case studies featuring trainees from different backgrounds, so that potential applicants have something to relate to. Leaders say they do this as there is a perception in some communities that teaching is not a profession they would be able to enter. However, there can be challenges with equivalency checks on qualifications obtained outside of the United Kingdom, which can create a barrier for some applicants.

Although the patterns of trainee recruitment vary between providers and locations, the reasons leaders give for declining applications include the lack of bursaries for primary trainees, concerns about behaviour in secondary schools, teacher workload and the lack of options for flexible working, and negative perceptions about teaching that are fuelled by the media.

There are also common reasons for difficulties in recruiting to some secondary phase subjects. Most leaders identified mathematics, science and computer science as shortage subjects. Others added English, physical education and geography. In addition, some leaders mentioned that it is now difficult to find suitably qualified applicants to teach modern foreign languages, as they do not get the same volume of

applicants from Europe post-Brexit. One reason leaders suggested for the shortage of applicants is the low number of graduates with degrees in relevant subjects, in the right locations, compared with the number of school placements and vacancies. However, there are isolated examples of providers experiencing higher volumes of applicants for secondary phase ITE programmes in science subjects.

Many provider leaders are taking additional steps to recruit trainees, including those from diverse backgrounds. For example, some are now attending recruitment events arranged by their local authority in addition to the 'get into teaching' events. Other leaders have published information about progression routes to show applicants that there are development options for teachers in schools.

Leaders have developed many strategies for supporting trainees to remain on their programme and subsequently take on teaching roles. Examples include robust recruitment processes to ensure that trainees are aware of the demands of the ITE programme, and work with mentors and ECTs in partner schools to help trainees to develop resilience and readiness to teach. In addition, leaders described additional pastoral and financial support for trainees with barriers to their learning and/or well-being. Provider leaders said that these strategies help to retain higher numbers of trainees, including those from diverse backgrounds.

Further education and skills phase ITE

Inspectors visited 23 providers offering ITE for the FE and skills phase. All but 2 of these visits were to providers that offer ITE for this phase only. The providers visited were a mix of those who have received an ITE inspection in the past and those who are newly in scope for an ITE inspection. We chose the providers to ensure there was a range of provider types, so that inspectors visited HEIs, general further education colleges,

independent learning providers (ILPs) and a local authority.

Theme 1: How successful have providers been in implementing the diploma in teaching (further education and skills) qualification framework/learning and skills teacher occupational standard?

The providers visited for the TMVs offer, between them, all routes into teaching in the FE and skills sector.

There are some differences in the extent to which leaders have implemented the DiT framework. In many cases, leaders have taken the opportunity to completely redevelop and revalidate their ITE curriculum. This is particularly the case in colleges working in partnership with HEIs. Leaders in other providers have recognised the need for change but acknowledge there is more to be done to bring year 2 of their programmes in line with the new framework. In a small number of cases, leaders have not updated the research that underpins their ITE curriculum. Therefore a few trainees continue to study learning styles without critique.

On the whole, leaders in providers delivering the level 5 learning and skills teacher standard ensure the ITE curriculum is mapped closely to the occupational standard. In many colleges, leaders enhance this with their own expectations of teaching in FE and skills. This is evident in providers who focus on training their own staff, where leaders embed their own expectations for high-quality teaching into the ITE curriculum.

Most trainees benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum that helps them to learn about a range of relevant teaching strategies. The trainees like the fact that they can discuss their teaching with their peers. Some leaders who employ or provide placements for trainees praise what trainees know and can do to manage a classroom, teach inclusively and check learning.

In many providers, leaders consider carefully how to ensure trainees learn about how to teach their specialist subject.

Inspectors saw examples of subject-specific webinars and conferences, trainees being 'grouped' to consider teaching strategies and the effective use of networks to bring trainees with the same specialisms together for delivery. Some leaders know that they need to increase the subject specificity in year 2 of the programme to ensure that trainees are prepared well enough to teach their specialist subject. However, in a small number of providers, the curriculum does not focus enough on teaching a specific subject.

When trainees are included as an integral part of a curriculum team in their workplace or on placement, they benefit from sharing subject-specific teaching resources. In some providers, trainees are required to complete a specific project on teaching their specialist subject. There are examples of trainees who maintain their external links with employers to update their subject knowledge. For example, inspectors heard about trainees preparing to teach hair and beauty related subjects continuing to work in salons.

Generally, the mentor provides pivotal training on teaching the trainee's specific subject. There are examples of leaders taking proactive steps to provide additional subject-specific support where the mentor cannot do this. However, in some providers, leaders do not fully realise the benefits of effective mentoring for trainees. In these providers, trainees do not always have a subject-specific mentor. This could have a negative impact on the development of the trainee's teaching skills.

Many leaders place high importance on placing trainees with the most appropriate mentor. They meet with mentors before the start of the programme to check that they have the right subject expertise and to ensure that they understand the requirements of the mentor role. Some leaders commented that the requirement for both subject and pastoral mentors could be challenging from a resource point of view.

Both the quality of mentor training and the oversight of mentors vary across the providers visited. This includes the content of

the ITE curriculum that trainees complete. Mentor training and oversight are the most common areas of the ITE provision that provider leaders want to improve. As a result of this variation, there is inconsistency in the quality of trainees' experiences. Where leaders oversee the work of mentors effectively, inspectors found examples of rapid interventions to bring about improvements in mentoring for the trainee.

Most trainees value the support they receive from their mentor, and the mentors speak highly of the trainees. A few mentors suggested that their experience would be even better if they had more opportunity to network with other mentors. In some providers where the ITE programmes are primarily for their own staff, mentors have a slight reduction in their teaching hours so that they can provide more support for their trainees. However, this is not common.

The aspect of the DiT framework that many leaders found challenging was the requirement for trainees to deliver online learning. Before this requirement was relaxed, some leaders were finding it difficult to make suitable arrangements for this, particularly for trainees teaching practical subjects such as construction.

Most trainees have suitable opportunities to practise their teaching in either their workplace or on placement. In many cases, this enables the trainee to benefit from seeing others teach their subject. In-service trainees have carefully phased opportunities to practise what they have learned. For example, they start by teaching just a small part of the class with their mentor before progressing to teaching the whole session. Inspectors heard about leaders introducing more structured plans for placements to ensure that trainees receive the teaching practice they are entitled to.

In providers that deliver ITE programmes aligned to the DiT framework, leaders have made suitable arrangements for second placements. In some cases, this is in a contrasting or even a specialist setting; in others, the second placement is with

different learners in the same provider. However, some leaders have not yet made firm plans for the second placement, as they plan for this to take place in the second year of the programme.

In some cases, leaders in the colleges delivering ITE in a validated partnership arrangement do not have autonomy over the ITE curriculum. This is designed by the validating HEI. Teacher educators in the colleges then sequence the content to suit the needs of their trainees.

Theme 2: How well do providers prepare trainees to teach learners with SEND?

Coverage of SEND in the ITE curriculum varies significantly for trainees preparing to teach in the FE and skills sector.

Inspectors saw many examples of SEND being given a high priority in the curriculum, with examples such as 'inclusion by design'. But in a few providers, the SEND content in the ITE curriculum is more fragmented. Trainees at these providers learn about some relevant adaptive teaching strategies but do not develop a deep knowledge, as the teaching about SEND is not integrated well enough in the curriculum. On occasion, what trainees learn is too basic.

The approach taken to training on SEND is also very different between providers, even in providers with the more comprehensive curriculum content. Some trainees complete an inclusive practice module; others have full-day workshops or regular masterclasses delivered by internal and/or external SEND specialists. At the other end of the spectrum, a small number of trainees receive as little as an hour of teaching on SEND. Leaders in some providers have reflected on the extent to which trainees are prepared to teach learners with SEND. As a result, they are planning additional training on this in year 2 of the programme.

Many trainees learn how to implement a range of relevant adaptive teaching strategies. This is often linked specifically to learners in the classes the trainees teach and referenced in

observations of the trainees' teaching. In the small number of cases where trainees teaching in a college do not have learners with SEND in their class, they are often supported to visit other classes to apply what they have learned. Alternatively, leaders consider options for trainees to complete their second placement in a specialist setting.

Some trainees also benefit from shadowing more experienced colleagues who teach learners with SEND or working with specialist additional learning support teams. A small number of trainees commented that they would like the opportunity to see others teaching learners with SEND. Trainees value opportunities to reflect on and discuss with others the approaches they take to teaching learners with SEND. However, a small number of providers still rely too much on this as a replacement for specific training on SEND.

Leaders in many providers include SEND specialists in the team who deliver training. Inspectors heard about examples of these specialists modelling the implementation of a variety of adaptive teaching strategies. Others develop effective links with specialist providers so that the ITE team can learn more about teaching learners with SEND. Inspectors saw examples of leaders inviting specialists in teaching learners with SEND to observe trainees and provide expert feedback.

In many colleges, there are staff development opportunities linked to the teaching of learners with SEND, including shadowing opportunities. Teacher educators, mentors and trainees are able to attend this training. Other staff benefit from hearing about research being carried out within the college and/or the validating university. This helps teacher educators to ensure the curriculum is informed by relevant and high-quality research. However, in some providers, mentors are not well enough informed about what trainees learn about SEND. This has a negative impact on the support they give to trainees. Inspectors also found isolated examples of trainees learning about outdated concepts, which then result in a lack of ambition for learners.

Many trainees demonstrate high levels of competence and confidence in teaching learners with SEND through their assessments and reflections. Some trainees develop their curiosity further and choose to focus on SEND in their individual research projects in the second year of their programme. Former trainees employed in some of the colleges visited commented that they felt well prepared to teach learners with SEND by the end of their ITE programme.

Theme 3: How effective are the arrangements for quality assurance and oversight between providers delivering ITE for FE and skills in partnership?

Not all of those visited in the ITE for FE and skills phase operate as part of a formal partnership.

Inspectors visited colleges delivering validated ITE programmes and HEIs that offer franchised provision through partner colleges. Many of the TMVs revealed well-established and effective partnership arrangements, where the expectations for the ITE provision are clearly understood by all partners.

There are similarities in the approach taken to the ITE curriculum by HEIs working with colleges on both a franchised and a validated basis. The HEI generally takes responsibility for the ITE curriculum but with contributions from the partner colleges. Leaders in the colleges often have the freedom to customise the ITE curriculum to meet the needs of their provider and trainees. In franchise partnerships, this extends to sharing teaching of some of the modules.

Leaders and teacher educators working in partnerships benefit from useful networks and communities of practice. They value the regular meetings and dedicated time they can spend with HEI staff, commenting on the positive impact this has on their own learning and development. Inspectors found examples of colleges working with others in the partnership to source second placements for their trainees.

Staff in the HEIs provide helpful standardisation activities and expert guidance on delivering the ITE curriculum. There are also examples of trainees attending subject-specific events such as 'teach meets', where they learn more about teaching their specialist subject and share experiences with others teaching the same subject.

Leaders in the partner colleges describe the quality assurance measures implemented by the validating or franchising HEIs as robust. There are regular cycles of assurance activity that include moderation, joint observations and oversight of trainees' progress. In some colleges, leaders supplement these arrangements with their own quality assurance systems. Inspectors heard about examples of improvements to the ITE curriculum as a result of effective quality assurance. These included inviting more guest speakers on the teaching of skills, and improving the teaching of SEND.

On the whole, providers that operate outside formal partnerships also employ appropriate strategies to check on aspects of their provision. Leaders of apprenticeship provision carefully check compliance with the accountability framework. They implement suitable systems for assessing what trainees know and can do at the start of the programme and for checking that progress reviews are carried out in line with expectations.

However, there are some examples of quality assurance systems that do not extend to some of the fundamental aspects of ITE, such as observations, target-setting and the quality of teaching experiences for trainees. While there are some checks on the effectiveness of the ITE curriculum, these are not commonplace. The most frequently occurring gap in quality assurance is the oversight of mentoring. Many leaders do not do enough to assure themselves that mentoring is being carried out as well as it could be and/or in line with leaders' expectations. Some leaders have plans in place to increase their checks on the quality of mentoring, but this is not the case in all providers where this is a gap.

Theme 4: How well do providers implement the level 5 learning and skills teacher apprenticeship standard to enable trainees to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to teach their subject well in the FE and skills sector?

In the providers that inspectors visited, the ITE provision included the level 5 learning and skills teacher apprenticeship standard in colleges, ILPs and the local authority. On the whole, leaders had a clear strategy for offering the standard. This is often part of their own broader strategy for recruiting and retaining teaching staff. Many leaders said that they selected this apprenticeship because it fits with their development and work-based approach to teacher training, enabling them to support industry specialists into teaching. Others talked about their role on the trailblazer group for the standard and their commitment to providing high-quality training for those teaching in FE and skills.

In most cases, leaders ensure that trainees are employed and teaching in an appropriate setting. However, inspectors did find trainees on the level 5 learning and skills teacher standard who were employed in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, inspectors heard about isolated examples of apprentices who were not new to teaching.

The apprentices teaching in FE and skills providers benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum that enables them to develop their knowledge and teaching skills over time. In addition to teaching strategies, apprentices learn about factors that are relevant to the FE and skills sector, such as the importance of their learners developing skills in English and mathematics, behaviour and attendance. However, in a few providers, leaders do not ensure that the ITE curriculum reflects pertinent and up-to-date research. As a result, trainees are taught about and apply some outdated concepts in their teaching.

In many cases, apprentices experience a programme of well-integrated on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices have meaningful opportunities to try out what they learn about from

their teacher educators and enjoy being able to observe others teaching. Trainees say that this is preparing them to teach in FE and skills providers and to be innovative in their teaching. However, some trainees do not know about the wider opportunities that might be open to them across the FE and skills sector.

Most trainees have the support of a mentor in the workplace. However, in a few providers, the mentor is not a subject specialist. Therefore, these trainees do not receive enough support to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching their specific subject well. The feedback that these trainees receive from their observations is often generic rather than linked to teaching their subject.

Leaders ensure that apprentices have the progress reviews that they are entitled to. In most cases, these support trainees to reflect well on their teaching. The trainees know what they do well and how they can improve their teaching. For example, trainees might know that there are aspects of questioning that they need to develop. This is not the case for all trainees. In some providers, trainees do not benefit from a clear line of sight between any observations of their teaching, feedback from mentors and the targets they are set during their reviews.

The recruitment and retention of trainees in the FE and skills phase.

The recruitment of trainees in the FE and skills phase of ITE often differs from that in the other phases given that many trainees are 'in-service'.

Provider leaders identify a number of challenges with the recruitment of teachers, and trainees, in the FE and skills sector. One of the most commonly cited challenges is the salary for teachers in this phase. This includes the disparity between schools and FE, and between industry and teaching salaries. Other leaders spoke about awareness of the FE and skills sector as another barrier to recruitment. On a TMV in a different

phase of ITE, inspectors found an example where trainees had completed an ITE for FE and skills qualification and then used their qualified teacher learning and skills status to apply for jobs in schools. In a small number of providers, leaders added location as an additional challenge for teachers and trainees. This could be due to transport links or to the proximity of the provider to other large employers.

Shortage subject areas in the FE and skills phase include plumbing, electrical engineering, construction, English, mathematics, digital and healthcare. The requirements for teachers on T-level programmes had added to some of these shortages, with midwifery being a specific example of this.

Leaders employ a range of strategies to mitigate the challenges of recruiting teachers and trainees in shortage areas. They offer flexible working arrangements and implement agreements with employers that enable their staff to teach in the college for a few hours. Some leaders also spoke about offering financial incentives or internal progression strategies. Additionally, inspectors heard examples of ITE creating an additional pipeline of high-quality teachers.

As trainees are often already employed as teachers, the strategies to support the retention of both trainees and teachers are generally linked. During the visits, inspectors spoke about the importance of supportive mentoring and how this is often the way trainees and teachers get advice on how to deal with particular challenges and the 'small things'. Mentors also play a key role in supporting teachers' and trainees' expectations about their workload and in developing strategies for managing their demanding workload. As in the other phases, workload is one of the most common reasons given for teachers and trainees leaving the profession.

Conclusions

Carrying out the TMVs has proved to be highly beneficial. The feedback from inspectors has already changed the way in which questions about partnerships are asked on the annual provider return. This is because of what we have learned from TMVs about the different approaches that accredited providers have taken to partnerships that involve lead partners.

We will also use the findings from the TMVs to inform inspector training in the future. There are now multiple examples of ITAP delivery that will be used to highlight the different approaches that can be taken. The TMVs provided valuable oversight during the period in which ITE inspections were paused.

In the early years phase, it is clear that leaders recognise the importance of mentoring and have high expectations for their mentors. However, it continues to be difficult for mentors to take time away from the settings for training and to support trainees. This is less of a challenge for leaders of primary and/or secondary phase ITE, where there is statutory guidance to define the expectations for mentoring. The TMVs have shown that the new requirements for lead mentors in primary and/or secondary phase ITE are being implemented effectively for the most part. Some mentors spoke of the extent to which their mentor training provides them with useful strategies for their own professional development and to improve their own teaching.

However, in the ITE for the FE and skills phase, there is variable practice in the mentoring of trainees. Leaders in some providers place high importance on this and ensure that trainees receive high-quality mentoring. But this is not the case for some trainees, who do not receive the same support and guidance to teach their specialist subject well.

In all phases, most trainees benefit from a well-planned and sequenced ITE curriculum that prepares them well to teach their subject(s) and phase. In the early years, leaders ensure that the curriculum develops trainees' understanding of the EYFS, including the learning and development requirements.

Most leaders of primary and/or secondary phase ITE provision select ITAP focus areas carefully and integrate them well into the broader ITE curriculum. One of the challenges facing provider leaders is the balance between providing enough detail on the pivotal areas while ensuring the topic is not too narrow. In a few cases, leaders have reflected that the ITAPs they delivered were too broad. A common theme across the TMVs was the positive feedback from trainees on some or all of the ITAPs they undertake. Headteachers in partner schools and mentors generally concur with this positive response to the impact of ITAPs on trainees' teaching practice.

In the ITE for FE and skills phase, leaders generally align the curriculum to the DiT framework or the occupational standard. However, there are examples of trainees being taught outdated concepts without any critique or consideration of more evidence-based approaches to effective teaching. Inspectors saw evidence of increasing amounts of subject specificity in the ITE curriculum for trainees in the FE and skills phase.

Particularly in the primary and secondary phases, inspectors found links between the three main themes. In many cases, mentors play a key role in delivering ITAPs, including those covering SEND. The training mentors receive can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of their support for trainees to support pupils and learners with SEND. If mentors do not know about the research-informed strategies that trainees learn about, they cannot support trainees to apply this learning. Inspectors also saw how timely and effective mentor training can have a positive impact on the success of an ITAP for individual trainees.

On the whole, provider leaders were very positive in their feedback about the TMVs. Some said that the TMVs had helped them to reflect on their provision and the way they have implemented ITAPs.

Annex A: The providers included in the thematic monitoring visit sample

Provider

2Schools Consortium

Activate Learning

Ark Teacher Training

Astra SCITT

Best Practice Network

Bishop Burton College

Bradford Birth to 19 SCITT

Buckingham Partnership

Bury College

Cambridge Training Schools Network, CTSN SCITT

Chepping View Primary Academy SCITT

Cheshire East SCITT

Chiltern Training Group

Compton SCITT

Cornwall SCITT Partnership

Crosby Management Training Ltd

Debut Training Academy Limited

Durham SCITT

East Midlands Teacher Training Partnership

East SCITT

EKC Group

e-Qualitas

Fareham and Gosport Primary SCITT

Gateshead College

Gloucestershire College

Goldsmiths, University of London

Hertford Regional College

HIT Training Ltd

Kent and Medway Training

King Edward's Consortium

King's College London

Kingsbridge EIP SCITT

Kingston upon Hull City Council

Lakes College – West Cumbria

Leeds Trinity University

Leicester College

Manchester Nexus SCITT

National Institute of Teaching (NlOT)

Norfolk, Essex and Suffolk Teacher Training (NESTT)

Pioneers Partnership SCITT

Prestolee SCITT

Preston College

QDOS Training Limited

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead SCITT

Scarborough Teaching Alliance

SCL Education and Training Limited

Somerset SCITT Consortium

South Birmingham SCITT

South Devon College

South Essex Colleges Group

St. Joseph's College Stoke Secondary Partnership

Stockton SCITT

Stourport SCITT

Sutton SCITT

Teach First

Teach Lead Bolton

Teaching London: LDBS SCITT

TES Institute

The Grand Union Training Partnership

The John Taylor SCITT

The National Modern Languages SCITT

The Recalvi Enterprise Ltd

The Shaw Education Trust

The Sheffield College

The Tommy Flowers SCITT Milton Keynes

TKAT SCITT

University of Chester

University of Chichester

University of Exeter

University of Gloucestershire

University of Northampton

University of Nottingham

University of Oxford

University of Southampton

University of Wolverhampton

University of Worcester

Vantage North Humber Teacher Training

York St John University

Annex B: The themes

Early years

1. How successful are the arrangements made by providers for their trainees to receive high-quality mentoring?
2. How well do providers prepare trainees to teach children with SEND and to carry out their future roles and responsibilities in the early identification of SEND?
3. How effective is the ITE curriculum in developing trainees' understanding of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS statutory framework? Does this enable trainees to develop the knowledge and skills to apply their learning about communication and language to their teaching?

Primary/secondary

1. How successful have providers been in implementing intensive training and practice (ITAP) within their primary and secondary ITE programmes?
Within this, inspectors will consider how well ITAP is integrated into the ITE curriculum for trainees.
2. How successful are the arrangements that providers implement to ensure that all trainees benefit from the high-quality mentoring that they are entitled to?
3. How well do providers prepare trainees to teach pupils with SEND?
4. [Where relevant] How effective have accredited providers been in developing partnerships and ensuring that they have sufficient oversight of the quality of education and training in their lead partners?

Further education and skills

1. How successful have providers been in implementing the diploma in teaching (further education and skills) qualification framework/learning and skills teacher occupational standard? Within this, inspectors will specifically consider the provision of a curriculum that is tailored to a particular subject, the quality of teaching practice/placements for trainees and the effectiveness of mentoring.
2. How well do providers prepare trainees to teach learners with SEND?
3. How effective are the arrangements for quality assurance and oversight between providers delivering ITE for FE and skills in partnership?
4. [Where relevant] How well do providers implement the level 5 learning and skills teacher apprenticeship standard to enable trainees to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to teach their subject well in the FE and skills sector?

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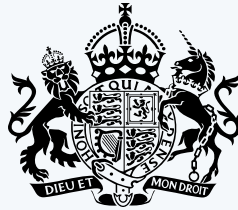
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