

Ark Teacher Training Partnership

Initial teacher education inspection report

Inspection dates Stage 1: 25 May 2016

Stage 2: 23 November 2016

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) and Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) in accordance with the 'Initial teacher education inspection handbook'. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2015.

The inspection draws on evidence from each phase within the ITE partnership to make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

	Primary and Secondary QTS
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high-quality outcomes for trainees?	1
The outcomes for trainees	1
The quality of training across the partnership	1
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	1

Primary and secondary routes

Information about this ITE partnership

- Ark Teacher Training (ATT) works with 29 schools, including four outside the Ark network. Virtually all of these schools are located in challenging socio-economic contexts. The vast majority of schools in the partnership are ethnically and linguistically diverse. The partnership extends over 15 local authority areas.
- The partnership began its own training programme in 2014 and has now awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) to over 120 teachers. In 2015/16, 26 primary and 44 secondary trainees undertook training to gain QTS through School Direct.
- Secondary trainees in 2015/16 specialised in biology, chemistry, physics, design and technology, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages (Spanish and French), music, physical education and religious education.

Information about the primary and secondary ITE inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 schools across the two stages of the inspection. They visited one school at both stages of the inspection. Inspectors observed 15 trainees during stage 1 of the inspection and 15 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) at stage 2. They observed four trainees at both stages of the inspection. School-based coaches and an induction tutor conducted observations jointly with inspectors over both stages of the inspection.
- During stage 1 of the inspection, inspectors also met with a further group of 10 trainees at the ATT office. An inspector held a conference call discussion with eight trainees based in Portsmouth and Birmingham. Inspectors met with the programme leaders and members of the strategic partnership board. Inspectors attended an assessment event for prospective trainees, observing recruitment and selection procedures first hand.
- During stage 2, inspectors spoke to employing headteachers and school induction tutors. They also held telephone conversations with two former trainees undertaking further academic study before beginning their first year of teaching. Inspectors conducted a conference call with NQTs who were teaching outside London. They held meetings with the programme leader and her deputy, the operations manager and the curriculum leader for primary and secondary training. Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to Ofsted's online survey.
- Across both stages of the inspection, inspectors evaluated a range of evidence, including evidence files, the work in pupils' books and pupils' assessment information, showing their attainment and progress. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation provided by the partnership, including information on the attainment and progress of trainees. They considered employment and completion rates since the partnership opened.

- Inspectors checked the partnership's safeguarding arrangements and ensured that the programme was in compliance with the initial teacher training (ITT) criteria.

Inspection team

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Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

The key strengths of the primary and secondary partnership are:

- Leaders' use of trainees' assessment information is exemplary. With leaders' use of this information, the programme is personalised to the needs of individuals and groups of trainees. The bespoke nature of the programme ensures that trainees make strong progress. The very large majority of trainees are outstanding by the end of the training programme.
- The programme leadership consistently applies its highly ambitious and exacting standards to all schools and coaches across the partnership. Schools and coaches meet these standards and when they do not this is rapidly addressed and resolved. This consistency is a hallmark of the programme. As a result, trainees continuously receive expert coaching throughout their training year. Coaches and trainees, together, demonstrate an unyielding pursuit of excellence for the pupils in their care.
- There is a strong and palpable moral purpose throughout the training and the work of all stakeholders. Together, they work to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential. Trainees become increasingly expert at reducing differences in learning and progress between groups of pupils through their teaching. Trainees' strong desire to do this emanates from their belief that education empowers pupils to have a greater range of choices for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

What does the primary and secondary partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- more widely share, in London and beyond, its exemplary teacher training, particularly its quality assurance and coaching of trainees
- review the impact of the further improved additional placement days to maintain the high levels of trainee employment and attainment.

Inspection judgements

1. The partnership's mission of ensuring 'a great teacher for every child' permeates through the entire programme and its work with trainees and schools. Trainees, from recruitment and selection, through their summer school and across the training year, continually explore the impact they have on reducing the attainment gap for key groups of pupils. Consequently, by the time trainees complete the course, they are passionate about improving the life chances of the pupils they teach. They actively explore assessment information and adapt their planning to challenge all groups of pupils. This 'golden thread' of excellence is a key attribute of all Ark Teacher Training NQTs.
2. Leaders leave no stone unturned when considering how to ensure that their trainees achieve an outstanding level of teaching by the end of their course. They meticulously examine all available information and evidence to ensure that they make small adaptations to their course throughout the year. This begins from the initial recruitment of trainees. The curriculum of face-to-face training and coaching is personalised to reflect trainees' starting points and development needs. Leaders meticulously analyse the progress of previous trainees to understand patterns of development. This understanding of progress has enabled leaders to develop a 'flight path' of expected progress to achieve outstanding in each individual teaching standard. It is this knowledge of trainees' start points and progress that has enabled the partnership to provide exceptionally tailored coaching and training. Furthermore, it is a key component in ensuring that the vast majority of trainees attain so highly by the end of the programme.
3. Leaders effectively instil their own best practice of data analysis in their trainees. Over time, the programme teaches trainees to analyse pupils' assessment information. Consequently, an exemplary feature of trainees' work is their ability and desire to explore pupils' start points, diagnose pupils' difficulties in learning and to overcome them through teaching. The steely determination of trainees helps to ensure that their pupils make the same or better progress as pupils being taught by experienced teachers in the same school. Employing headteachers say that by the end of the spring term, Ark trainees are as strong or better at teaching phonics as their experienced staff. This is exceptional, given that NQTs have been in post less than one term and that this includes those who are now working outside the Ark network of schools.
4. Trainees are prepared well for the rigours of teaching in a challenging school context. Programme leaders engage exceptionally well with all schools and provide a comprehensive handover, which includes a face-to-face meeting with employers. This meeting ensures that employing schools understand the training programme and the school contexts in which NQTs trained. Each trainee sets bespoke targets for their induction year, working to improve relative weaknesses in their attainment against the teachers' standards. These are detailed and well planned. Trainees are required to provide deep evidence to rationalise why the targets will result in further improvements to their teaching.

5. The partnership offers all NQTs and employing schools support during the induction year to achieve these targets. This year, all employing schools have accepted this offer. This illustrates the excellent relationship that programme leaders quickly develop with schools outside their formal training partnership. All employing schools agree and nine in every 10 strongly agree that ATT has impacted positively on the development of their NQT through these induction arrangements.
6. The partnership includes both Ark and non-Ark multi-academy trust schools. Regardless of the governance of a school, the quality of coaching and curriculum is uniformly excellent. Leaders set exceptionally high expectations for all stakeholders. Exacting standards hold all stakeholders, for example, headteachers, coaches, trainers and centrally employed staff, to account for their work for the partnership. As a result, the expectations for everyone are crystal clear, including their roles and responsibilities. Programme leaders monitor each stakeholder against a clear, codified rubric. ATT staff use this rubric to quality assure stakeholders during their fortnightly visits to training schools. Individuals receive detailed feedback about how to improve further in the role. ATT staff discuss this with individuals, document their findings and check for improvement in future visits. Everyone values this level of challenge as, across the partnership, nothing but the best is good enough. Leaders have ensured that the sharing of best practice among stakeholder groups is a well-established aspect of the programme.
7. Trainees have extensive exposure to schools in challenging socio-economic circumstances. Trainees who are not based in a school that requires improvement gain this explicit experience in their training, for example, during alternative placement days. As a result, trainees have a deep understanding of the issues facing schools nationally, for example, issues highlighted by Ofsted such as underachievement in coastal towns and the underachievement of some key groups, such as White British boys in London.
8. Trainees have a strong knowledge of their role in protecting their pupils through safeguarding. They have a working knowledge of how to identify and respond to issues such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, gangs and neglect. Inspectors also found that trainees had a clear understanding of their responsibilities in respect of the 'Prevent' duty. They knew how to report concerns about extremism and the key warning signs to look for in potentially radicalised pupils.

9. ATT has made a strong contribution to the supply of outstanding teachers, particularly in London, but, to a limited extent, also in Birmingham, Portsmouth and Hastings. Trainees' deep intellectual understanding of the educational issues facing these areas builds on their unwavering commitment to closing educational gaps for key groups. Together with their outstanding effectiveness in relation to the teachers' standards, these elements combine to ensure that they make an overwhelmingly positive impact on their local communities as NQTs.
10. Coaches have an absolute commitment to their role. Schools in the programme highly respect and value coaches, providing them with ample time to carry out their role. Furthermore, they have regular, high-quality training to develop their own skills. In line with the Carter Review recommendations, the partnership has a set of standards expected from coaching. This allows individual coaches to take responsibility for improving their effectiveness. Leaders also have an absolute understanding of the quality of each individual coach. They provide tireless support and challenge to ensure that coaching is of the very highest standard. Virtually all coaching is outstanding against the partnership's well-developed criteria. The partnership's own monitoring of coaching shows that one in four coaches are performing at an 'exemplary' level.
11. The coaching of trainees is extensive. Trainees benefit weekly from:
 - co-planning, where the coach and trainee plan a lesson or part-lesson together
 - rehearsing a lesson or part lesson, where the trainee and coach, working together, practise the lesson and anticipate pupils' potential misconceptions, errors or difficulties. Together they problem solve and plan to overcome difficulties for individuals and groups
 - video observations, where together, the trainee and coach observe and discuss a lesson that has been videoed
 - real-time coaching, where the coach observes a lesson, but provides feedback to the trainee during the lesson, enabling the trainee to adapt their teaching and see the benefit of making small changes to their work with pupils.
12. All coaching focuses resolutely on small, achievable targets linked to individual teachers' standards. The partnership's stakeholders refer to these as the 'highest leverage action-steps', where they make a small change to teaching that will have the biggest effect. Trainees told inspectors of the very high quality of their coaching and that this has a significant impact on their progress. One trainee typified the discussions many trainees had with inspectors when she said, 'I feel so privileged to have had such comprehensive and regular coaching that meets my individual needs. I've been given the tools and knowledge to flourish and, most importantly, to support really positive outcomes with the pupils I teach.'

13. Training for literacy across the curriculum is highly effective. Trainees develop pupils' vocabulary and understanding of the English language strongly. Subject-specific vocabulary is explicitly taught and trainees help pupils understand the meaning of words. At stage 1, inspectors found that secondary trainees were not consistently correcting pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes. The programme responded with rapid determination. NQTs strongly testify that their key responsibility for this aspect of pupils' work was reinforced. Where errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar were identified at stage 2 of the inspection, NQTs consistently helped pupils address and correct their errors. Indeed, NQTs demonstrated their awareness of ensuring that pupils' spoken English conformed with standard English. Inspectors found that pupils were being helped to understand the difference between colloquial and formal English. This prepares pupils well for their next stage of education, training or employment.
14. As trainees gain employment, leaders continue to tailor training sessions, (subject studies sessions and professional studies for secondary trainees) and placements to meet individuals' specific needs. Trainees are able to adapt their additional placement days to focus explicitly on preparing for their employing schools, especially when this is in a different context and/or out of the Ark network of schools. Trainees, therefore, receive excellent opportunities to reflect on how deeply they have attained a teachers' standard. They actively consider how changing contexts may affect their ability to achieve outstanding results for their pupils. This prepares trainees exceptionally well for the challenges of changing employer and adapting to new school systems, policies and routines.
15. Alternative placements are highly valued by trainees. They use these learning experiences very well to enhance further their attainment in individual teachers' standards. Trainees deeply reflect on how they can make the best use of this time. With their specific development needs in mind, they read widely, exploring scholarly research, educational books and national reports from HM Government and Ofsted. Trainees agree placement contexts and make use of a wide range of specialist education settings, such as special schools, pupil referral units, nurseries and sixth-form colleges. Trainees are expected to bring back ideas and strategies to use in their own work, for example when working with pupils who have specific needs. This helps to ensure that trainees demonstrate an excellent ability to teach and support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

16. During stage 1 of the inspection, inspectors found evidence that, whilst the additional placement days were well used and having a strong impact on trainees' development, leaders had not applied their usual meticulous analysis to explore the impact of these placements. Leaders responded resolutely. They presented a highly detailed report which showed that the alternative placement days had significant impact. However, they found that the Ark 'swap days', where trainees went to another internal Ark school, were not resulting in the trainees' same rapid development of the teachers' standards. Leaders have discontinued these swap days from 2016/17. Trainees will instead spend this time experiencing a range of alternative settings. This has been planned exceptionally well to ensure that trainees have an even deeper experience of a range of contexts. Wide reading and tasks will support each additional day away from their main placement school. Leaders have skilfully built this new curriculum on proven evidence of what has previously enabled trainees to make strong progress in their teaching skills.
17. NQTs have a strong understanding of the phase that comes before and after the one they have trained in. This enables them to provide strong support for pupils after transferring to a new key stage of learning. This is in part due to the additional placement days trainees have in nurseries, primary and secondary schools, and sixth-form colleges. The programme also provides trainees with extensive opportunities to explore the curriculum beyond their specific training phase. Inspectors found that this supported trainee in setting high expectations, particularly for Year 7 pupils at secondary school.
18. Trainees ensure that the most able and disadvantaged most able pupils are continually given opportunities to deepen their learning through applying their learning in unfamiliar contexts. They also ensure that they allow them more opportunities to explain and justify their thinking. This is a particularly strong feature in primary mathematics teaching, but is evident across trainees' primary and secondary teaching. Overall, primary trainees receive high-quality training in the teaching of mathematics. They consistently apply this in their explicit teaching of the subject and seize opportunities to make meaningful links across the curriculum.
19. Primary trainees are well prepared to teach physical education. They have a clear understanding of the subject and are helped to progressively develop pupils' skills in a range of sports and physical activities.
20. The training provides trainees with a clear moral purpose, that all pupils can succeed and no one is left behind. They demonstrate an unwavering belief that all children can succeed regardless of their background or starting point. They plan exceptionally well for the least able to make strides forward in their learning. As a result, they make a significant contribution in their schools in diminishing the differences in the achievement and progress made between different groups of pupils.

21. Completion rates are consistently high and well above the national average for both the primary and secondary trainees. The number of trainees who leave the programme early is exceptionally small. This is in part due to the highly rigorous recruitment and selection process and the high academic standards of the programme. Only four out of every 10 applicants are interviewed. All prospective trainees are interviewed centrally and by the employing school. Only one in every 19 applicants is finally accepted onto the programme. Leaders consider learning points from previous cohorts when they update the recruitment criteria each year. In particular, they consider why individual trainees have not achieved outstanding grades in individual aspects of each teachers' standard. Consequently, leaders' knowledge of what makes an outstanding NQT frames the rigorous recruitment and selection criteria.
22. All trainees exceed the minimum level expected for QTS. They demonstrate excellent overall skills across the teachers' standards, including in their professional conduct. By the end of the programme, trainees typically have particular strengths in teachers' standards 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7. Trainees benefit from a high focus on developing a climate for learning and behaviour management strategies in their summer school. This does not simply provide them with a limited range of 'drills'. It enables them to reflect on best practice and to practise key elements of establishing a positive focus on learning in the classroom. For example, they consider and practise lining pupils up, settling them for learning, taking the register and dealing with challenging behaviour. This ensures that they feel confident and prepared to take on the role of a teacher in September. Pupils, therefore, see them as a teacher from the very start. This allows them to focus quickly on developing their other teachers' standards. They have a wide range of assessment strategies and are skilled at identifying pupils' learning in lessons. NQTs confidently adapt learning based on the emerging needs of pupils and use the information gained to adapt future learning for groups and individuals. The strengths above are particularly notable and significant given the national weakness of teachers' standards 2 and 6.
23. Over time, a very large majority of trainees' teaching results in outstanding progress and this continues into their first employment as an NQT. Headteachers of employing schools are unanimous in their praise for NQTs. They report that they quickly settle into their role as a qualified teacher.
24. The partnership complies fully with the initial teacher training (ITT) criteria. Leaders rigorously audit their work to ensure that they meet all requirements and that their partnership schools also comply. They effectively promote equality and diversity, work to eliminate discrimination and meet all requirements for safeguarding. Programme leaders ensure that all partnership schools meet the additional ITT criteria that apply to School Direct (salaried) trainees.

Annex: Partnership schools

The following schools were visited to observe trainees' and newly qualified teachers' teaching:

Ark Academy, Brent
Ark Atwood Primary Academy, Westminster
Ark Brunel Primary Academy, Kensington and Chelsea
Ark Burlington Danes Academy, Hammersmith and Fulham
Ark Conway Primary Academy, Hammersmith and Fulham
Ark Elvin Academy, Brent
Ark Globe Academy, Southwark
Ark John Keats Academy, Enfield
Ark King Solomon Primary Academy, Westminster
Ark King Solomon Secondary Academy, Westminster
Ark Oval Academy, Croydon
Eastbury Community School, Barking and Dagenham
Kensington Aldridge Academy, Kensington and Chelsea
London Enterprise Academy, Tower Hamlets
Preston Manor School, Brent
Reach Academy Feltham, Hounslow

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70292
Inspection number	10010241
Inspection dates	Stage 1 25 May 2016
	Stage 2 23 November 2016
Lead inspector	David Storrie, HMI
Type of ITE partnership	SCITT
Phases provided	Primary and secondary
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Previous inspection report	Not previously inspected

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