



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Swansea University Schools' Partnership  
Department of Education and Childhood Studies, Swansea  
University, Singleton Park  
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**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Swansea University Schools' Partnership

The Swansea University Schools' Partnership comprises the University of Swansea, fourteen lead schools and fifty network schools situated in south and west Wales. In the university, the partnership is based in the Department of Education and Childhood Studies which sits within the School of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The partnership provides two programmes. The PGCE Secondary programme was accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in 2020 to offer nine subjects: biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, design and technology, English, mathematics, Modern Foreign Languages, and Welsh. Following accreditation, the PGCE Primary programme began in 2022.

Both PGCE programmes are full-time, one-year courses. The primary programme and all subject routes on the secondary programme are offered with options to study through the medium of Welsh.

There are 68 students following the PGCE Secondary programme, of whom 10 are taking the course through the medium of Welsh. There are 25 students on the PGCE Primary programme with 5 studying through the medium of Welsh.

## Summary

In the four years since the Swansea University Schools' Partnership (SUSP) began its initial teacher training offer, university and school staff have collaborated purposefully, establishing a partnership built on trust and mutual respect. There is a clear vision, shared and enacted by all partners, to develop student teachers who are research-informed and reflective practitioners.

Both programmes are well designed to support students in their development to become effective classroom practitioners. A wide range of enriching opportunities complement well the incremental learning experiences that develop students' phase and subject pedagogies.

Research and enquiry are central to the work of the partnership. Programmes are rooted in a sound understanding of what makes good initial teacher education, partnership staff model effective practice in engagement with research, and many students develop their critical skills well. There is a careful blending of theory and practice that ensures that scholarly activity is seen as integral to developing effective pedagogy.

As a result of successful teaching and learning experiences, students develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well over the duration of their programme. Around half of students make very good progress. Many students develop a wide range of teaching skills. Although many students have good lesson planning skills, a minority of students do not plan well enough to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills.

Many tutors teach with expertise and enthusiasm. They have a shared approach to developing students' critical thinking and use a wide range of approaches to develop students' understanding of effective teaching and learning. On school experience, mentors generally support students' well-being effectively, and in the best cases, mentors engage students well in professional dialogue and help them to make swift improvement. However, a minority of mentors do not identify students' areas for improvement sharply enough and do not help them to consider the effectiveness of their teaching in terms of pupil progress sufficiently.

A resolute moral purpose, effective communication and a strong sense of community provide a firm foundation for supporting student teachers' well-being. The interrelated nature of effective programme design, targeted support and positive working relationships ensure that nearly all student teachers feel respected and supported. They develop a wide range of professional skills and attributes that prepare them well for career-long learning.

Although the partnership is strengthening its self-evaluation and is developing helpful reporting procedures including worthwhile opportunities to collect and analyse first-hand evidence, partnership leaders have recognised weaknesses in these processes. In addition, joint leadership, specifically, the involvement of lead schools in partnership self-evaluation, quality assurance and planning for improvement is at an early stage of development.

The partnership makes effective use of its resources, drawing successfully on the expertise of school partners to contribute to the programmes and taking advantage of university staff, facilities and innovations to benefit students' learning. The partnership is highly regarded within the university and senior university leaders promote effectively the interchange of ideas, technologies and practice between initial teacher education and the wider university.

## Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation processes, including developing opportunities for school partners to play a full role in evaluation, quality assurance and driving improvement
- R2 Improve the consistency of the quality of mentoring to ensure that feedback enables student teachers to develop as effective classroom practitioners
- R3 Ensure that the programmes deliver purposeful opportunities for student teachers to develop their ability to plan for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills

## What happens next

Estyn will invite the partnership to prepare a case study for dissemination on Estyn's website on its work in relation to:

- The partnership's support for student well-being
- The valuable integration of research and enquiry throughout the programme

## Main findings

### Learning:

On both the PGCE Primary and PGCE Secondary programmes, student teachers make good progress towards becoming competent, qualified teachers. Around half of students make strong progress. Nearly all students feel well prepared to start their teaching career.

Over the duration of their programmes, nearly all students develop a sound understanding of how pupils learn and of effective subject and phase pedagogies. They have a secure knowledge of the curriculum requirements for the pupils they teach, and most are developing well their understanding of how teaching and learning may be adapted for different ages and abilities.

Overall, students have good planning skills. Most plan successfully for a series of lessons, building progressively on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Many students identify clear learning goals for their pupils, although a few do not specify the intended learning clearly enough. Many students select appropriate teaching and learning approaches, that are suitable for the lesson content, subject or phase, and help pupils meet the desired objectives of the lesson. Many take good account of pupils' prior learning experiences and, in the most successful cases, make pertinent links across different curriculum areas, for example by planning links between learning about rainforests in science and geography to pupils' art studies, when they explore the paintings of Henri Rousseau following a trip to a tropical indoor zoo. Many students consider carefully how to create authentic learning experiences for their pupils to reinforce concepts. A minority use this knowledge adeptly on their school experiences, for instance, when teaching mathematics, considering the importance of the ratio and proportion of ingredients in a banana loaf that pupils had baked in a food technology lesson. A minority of students plan highly creative lessons. They design imaginative learning experiences for pupils, providing rich and engaging contexts for learning, for example by developing their own computer game to support younger pupils' mathematical understanding.

In school, nearly all students establish professional and purposeful working relationships with staff and pupils. Most have clear classroom routines. They draw successfully on a suitable range of management strategies, and many have high expectations of behaviour. They are enthusiastic about their subject or area of expertise, and many foster this enthusiasm in their pupils.

Most students communicate effectively. They are good language models and provide clear instructions and explanations. They interact well with their pupils. Many are developing their questioning skills well. They ask an appropriate balance of open and closed questions. A majority ask probing questions that test pupils' understanding. These student teachers engage pupils in purposeful conversations to support their learning. However, a minority of students use questioning less successfully. They do not always give their pupils enough time to frame their answers or explain their thinking.

Many student teachers are developing a confidence in the classroom that allows them to respond flexibly to pupils' progress. They circulate the classroom well to support pupils in their work, questioning individuals and small groups about their learning and to develop their thinking. They address misconceptions in pupils' learning effectively and in a timely manner, and often adapt their lessons depending on pupil progress. They use a wide range of effective strategies to engage pupils, including pair and group work, well-designed practical tasks and the use of attractive and stimulating resources. Planned learning experiences are engaging, well sequenced and well timed. However, in a few cases, students do not match the pace and challenge in the lesson well enough to pupils' learning. These students do not plan activities that are demanding or engaging enough, or they do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Many students plan to meet the differing needs of pupils well, for example they plan suitably challenging tasks for more able pupils or provide helpful support for those with additional learning needs (ALN). However, although they identify the need to support a range of pupils' abilities in their planning, a few students do not consider well enough how to provide appropriate challenge and, as a result, pupils do not always sustain their engagement sufficiently or make enough progress. In addition, a few student teachers do not ensure that poor behaviour is addressed quickly enough, and in these cases pupils' learning is limited.

Many student teachers have sound literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Generally, they understand the importance of developing pupils' skills. A few students plan engaging opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills, for example by using interactive presentation software to engage the whole class in debate, or by creating a virtual Celtic village. However, overall, their ability to plan for and support pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Many Welsh first language students have very good Welsh language skills. They speak confidently and write fluently, mutating correctly and extending their ideas in more complex sentences using a wide range of vocabulary. Nearly all students who are learning the Welsh language make satisfactory progress. However, while many student teachers develop their personal Welsh language skills suitably, a minority miss opportunities in their teaching to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. They make limited use of the language themselves in their teaching.

Many students develop their knowledge and understanding well on the taught programmes. They make thoughtful links between education theory, what they have observed in school and the development of their own practice. They demonstrate a secure understanding of different approaches to curriculum design, which helps them to reflect on how they might structure learning successfully. Many achieve a good grasp of the fundamentals of lesson planning early in the programmes and continue to hone and explore these skills during their time on the course.

Most students think that programme tasks and assignments have supported their teaching effectively. Many students are exceptionally conscientious in their studies and read widely and pertinently to complete programme tasks. They produce well-presented and thoughtful academic assignments on a range of valuable areas of study related closely to their phase or subject, investigating the effectiveness of

specific teaching approaches on pupils' performance, or exploring pupils' perceptions of the quality of their learning experiences. In many cases, students draw upon their academic studies to reflect on and develop their own teaching approaches. Most students employ a wide range of research methods. Many select these with understanding to carry out worthwhile small-scale research projects that elicit informative and beneficial results.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning:**

Nearly all student teachers demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. They are engaged and curious during seminars and lectures, exercising self-discipline and concentrating well. Throughout their taught sessions, student teachers engage actively in tasks and discussions, creating a positive learning environment. Throughout the programmes, most students develop important personal and professional attitudes and behaviours for career-long learning. Many demonstrate a strong understanding of the current challenges and opportunities in education, for example by considering how artificial intelligence may influence their lesson planning.

Many students are aware of the importance of maintaining good mental health and make effective use of lectures and seminars that support their well-being. For example, they use 'scenario-based approaches', such as exploring how to achieve a positive work-life balance, building resilience and trying out approaches to collaboration with others.

Where appropriate, student teachers use the support, advice and guidance provided by the university positively to promote and manage their well-being proactively, for example through accessing university services to help them with unexpected financial issues. They value regular meetings with their tutors and mentors to prioritise their learning and manage their work life balance.

Nearly all students feel listened to, well supported and know where to access advice and guidance both in university and on school placement. Many make good use of specialist support to help them with personal matters. They form strong and highly effective professional relationships with both mentors and tutors. These relationships are based on mutual respect and trust which create a collaborative culture, supporting open and formative discussions within seminars and tutor meetings.

Nearly all student teachers feel safe both on the taught programme and on placement. They understand the safeguarding processes and procedures in school and in university. They engage well in seminars and lectures to develop a professional understanding of equity and inclusion, including developing their understanding of how to promote pupil voice, for example through workshops on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and incorporating this learning into their own teaching. Students develop their understanding of how to report and escalate incidents of racism and how to develop a curriculum which is grounded in anti-racism approaches to teaching and learning.

Nearly all student teachers engage proactively in opportunities and processes to have a say in what and how they learn. Many are conscientious in completing mid-module surveys and attending focus groups. Many students develop their leadership skills well through opportunities such as presenting at conferences and taking part in

research presentation days with alumni and other education staff. Student representatives take their responsibilities seriously and contribute well to the development of the programmes, for example through contributing to partnership fora and advisory groups. Many student teachers engage well in community-centred activities within the partnership to promote their well-being, such as planning a staff-student Christmas party.

Most students demonstrate a strong professional commitment to seeking and acting on advice and support. They collaborate well with their peers and other professionals and are committed to learning from and with others.

Nearly all students evaluate their own lessons regularly both formally and informally. Many are suitably analytical in their evaluations and articulate their progress and targets for improvement well. They make thoughtful connections to their reading when reflecting on their school experience, for example when exploring strategies to best support the more able pupils. However, in a minority of cases, students' reflections are too superficial and do not focus well enough on the progress pupils are making in the classroom in relation to their teaching approaches.

Nearly all student teachers feel supported by university tutors to find solutions to problems through research. They engage well in developing their research skills and understand and value the links between theory and practice. A notable strength of the partnership is the research conference where student teachers share their research projects effectively to a wide audience.

During school experience, nearly all student teachers collaborate effectively with senior mentors and mentors to act on feedback promptly. They engage actively in coaching conversations to support their wider development. Student teachers show compassion and empathy as they undertake their school experience. Most student teachers work well with their school colleagues and to contribute to wider pupil experiences, for example, by attending residential visits or running extra-curricular clubs.

The attendance of a few student teachers is lower than expected at university. However, appropriate specialist university support is accessed by student teachers effectively to support improving attendance, for example where there has been a bereavement within the family. Most student teachers arrive punctually for their university taught sessions. Nearly all student teachers have a positive attitude to their school experience and attend this component of their programmes well.

### **Teaching and learning experiences:**

Both PGCE programmes offer purposeful opportunities to develop students' understanding of what it means to be a teacher in Wales and to meet the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards successfully. The programmes are underpinned securely by a robust and well-considered framework that emphasises the links between theory, research and practice and promotes critical reflection.

Both programmes are well constructed. Each curriculum coherently integrates key elements of curriculum design, learning theories, and effective teaching and assessment approaches. Modules build incrementally on students' knowledge,



supporting their development in planning for pupil progression and their understanding of subject-specific and phase-specific pedagogies. Particular strengths of the programmes include, the successful linking of theoretical and practical elements, so that students develop research skills that are applicable to their classroom practice, and fostering a comprehensive understanding of the educational context of Wales. Leaders seek opportunities to innovate, for example through developing creative and effective learning experiences such as the observation classrooms that nurture critical thinking and reflective practice for students on the primary programme.

The partnership responds positively to student feedback, adjusting the timing of important learning experiences such as behaviour management and lesson planning to better prepare students for their first school experience.

The programmes integrate taught components with practical experiences successfully, particularly through strategically scheduled Practice and Theory (PaT) days. School and university staff design and deliver these learning experiences collaboratively to enable students to explore aspects of research in a practical context. PaT days allow students to share experiences and apply new insights to improve their understanding of a range of teaching approaches and whole-school issues such as effective assessment and behaviour management. The university uses feedback from students and staff well to improve the quality of these learning experiences.

Assignments and research projects link theory to practice securely and develop students effectively as reflective practitioners, supporting the development of their critical skills well. Assignments are thoughtfully planned, helping students to develop their teaching skills in a timely manner, and to consider their learning in the light of their own practice. Students benefit from a range of well-considered opportunities to explore meaningful links between research and classroom practice, such as sharing their views on research in a virtual exchange with students from the University of Warsaw, or engaging with partnership school staff in sessions that showcase how their scholarly enquiry makes a positive difference to their work in school.

Provision for developing students' personal literacy, numeracy, and digital skills is suitable and includes targeted workshops and peer support. The university offers useful opportunities for developing Welsh language skills, including a Welsh skills audit, which leads to taught sessions that target the individual needs of students. The university offers valuable learning experiences for students to practise their Welsh in informal settings such as the Clwb Cinio for primary students, and a Swansea University Schools' Partnership Eisteddfod. However, overall, learning opportunities to ensure students use their understanding to plan for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills are underdeveloped.

Both programmes are firmly rooted in the Welsh context. The programmes' focus on the culture, environment, economy and history of Wales provides students with a deeper understanding which they draw upon effectively in their academic assignments and in their own teaching.

The partnership provides well-planned school experiences for all students. Students experience two consecutive age phases, aiding their comprehensive understanding

of teaching across different developmental stages. Planned reflective conversations with peers, tutors, and mentors support the journey towards QTS, providing a collaborative environment for professional development.

The partnership has suitable systems in place to ensure students transition smoothly from one school placement to the next. 'Learning conversations' and structured opportunities to reflect on progress and plan for the next school experience are effective in ensuring that mentors have a detailed understanding of their students, and that appropriate support is put in place to meet their needs.

There are valuable opportunities for students to obtain helpful additional qualifications relevant to their teaching, for example, through design and technology workshop practice, or a British Sign Language programme. PGCE primary students undertake an Open University course in 'Developing Reading for Pleasure', which supports them well to develop approaches to engage pupils in reading.

A wide range of enrichment activities broadens students' experiences, including understanding and teaching the history and experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBT+ people through the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Conference. Programmes are designed to make best use of visiting speakers, former students and expertise from staff in the wider university to provide a valuable breadth to the programmes. The programmes also offer valuable experiences that allow students to develop their understanding of learning in different contexts, such as using the university's Egypt Centre to explore museum-based education, or looking at effective approaches to pupils' attitudes to learning through working with Swansea City Football Club.

The partnership has a clear, research-informed philosophy for teaching on its programmes. It makes explicit the characteristics of effective pedagogy in initial teacher education (ITE), and this helps to support the delivery of high-quality university taught sessions.

Nearly all tutors, senior mentors and mentors build strong working relationships with their student teachers. They are supportive and respond well to students' needs. This includes fostering their well-being and developing student teachers' professional dispositions as to what it means to be a teacher in Wales.

Many tutors and university teaching staff have high expectations of student teachers. They have good subject knowledge and a sound understanding of the pedagogies of ITE. They use a range of teaching approaches in university taught sessions, many of which students emulate in their own teaching. For example, they promote critical thinking particularly well, they make effective use of questioning and provide valuable opportunities for student teachers to discuss and share their ideas in pairs and small groups. Tutors work together effectively through team-teaching, which effectively models to students the value of reflecting on their practice critically and collaboratively. Tutors contribute collectively to provide guidance on research methodology, supporting each other in developing students' knowledge and understanding. Many make pertinent and valuable links to their own research to support students' knowledge, make reference to up-to-date resources and to role model good practice in professional learning.

Tutors and mentors support students effectively when engaging in their research projects, enabling students to link educational theory purposefully to their practice. Tutors provide detailed and helpful feedback to students on their written assignments. They place a high value on ensuring that students develop a strong understanding of research methods, but not at the expense of their understanding of what makes effective teaching. University-based moderation processes for the assessment of students' progress are fair and robust.

Senior mentors and mentors provide regular and appropriate oral feedback to their students following lesson observations and during weekly catch-up meetings. Generally, mentor feedback is effective in identifying the main areas for improvement in students' teaching. However, a minority of mentors, for do not support students well enough to develop aspects of their planning, such as meeting the needs of all pupils, or developing pupils' skills. These mentors do not help students to consider the effectiveness of their teaching and planning well enough, or to make links to relevant educational research. Where practice is at its best, mentors engage students in effective professional conversations that support them well to reflect critically to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. A particularly helpful strategy to support students' progress and understanding is the use of 'pit stops', where mentors provide timely interventions during lessons to engage students in professional dialogue. This is highly effective in providing students with immediate, 'in situ' feedback to improve the quality of their teaching and learning.

Generally, tutors' and mentors' written feedback is helpful in providing students with an evaluation of the progress they are making against their individual targets and the standards for QTS. However, in a minority of cases, targets set are not specific enough to enable students to develop key areas of their teaching. In addition, a minority of mentors do not support students specifically enough in meeting their targets for improvement, for example in developing their questioning skills, or honing their classroom management. In these instances, students do not make enough progress in important aspects of their practice.

### **Care, support and guidance:**

Leaders, tutors and mentors work together effectively and coherently, across the partnership, to support student teachers well. Both programmes provide rich and varied opportunities for students to develop the dispositions, values and behaviours needed to succeed in their future teaching roles. Strong working relationships between student teachers, university tutors and school-based staff are a notable strength of the partnership. University tutors provide highly valued support and advice, supporting students' well-being and academic progress throughout the programmes. They are accessible and respond swiftly to any concerns student teachers may have. This level of support is highly valued by nearly all students.

From the start of the course, students are encouraged to work effectively with others. There are valuable opportunities for student teachers to collaborate, within their phases, subjects and across areas of learning and experience as they make connections between their studies and their school experiences. Tutors model effective collaboration, for example through worthwhile team-teaching strategies, and student teachers have useful opportunities to team teach with school-based staff as they start their school experiences. There are suitable opportunities for students to

develop their leadership skills, such as through representation on partnership advisory groups and presenting at conferences.

The partnership's vision to develop research-informed reflective practitioners is strongly embedded throughout the programmes. Student teachers are provided with numerous valuable opportunities to engage and develop their research skills. The Department's Centre for Research into Practice (CRIP) seminar sessions provide student teachers with opportunities to engage thoughtfully with research from other disciplines to support their own enquiry.

The programmes offer strong opportunities for student teachers to reflect deeply on how their own practice benefits from their engagement with theory. The programmes fully support students to become reflective practitioners, through their academic modules, the PaT Days and multiple opportunities to work purposefully with their peers. These aspects of the provision help student teachers to participate in rich and meaningful conversations around research and enquiry that encourages nearly all students to engage in high quality reflection. For example, they consider the effectiveness of practice they have observed in their school experiences fairly, sensitively and with integrity to help them refine their own teaching.

The annual research conference provides nearly all students with worthwhile opportunities to engage with the partnership and consider how their own research supports pupils' learning and progress. The event also provides a valuable opportunity for student teachers to understand the importance of Schools as Learning Organisations. This is a notable strength of the programmes.

Throughout the programmes, students develop their understanding of the cultures and communities in which they work. For example, the equity, diversity and inclusion PaT Day focuses purposefully on the impact of poverty on educational achievement. Tutors draw on the expertise of outside agencies, such as Action for Children, to provide a valuable specialist insight to the programmes. Students also benefit from deepening their understanding of the diverse nature of Wales through meaningful sessions with Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL).

Mentors and tutors provide valuable tailored support for students when they complete their Professional Learning Passports and start preparing for induction as newly qualified teachers. Students are also encouraged to engage with the university's employability service that offers valuable support on accessing the world of work and further study opportunities. There are suitable processes for students to audit their personal skills and identify any deficits in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through accessing useful online resources and drop-in sessions, provided by tutors and peers, to improve their personal skills.

University tutors know their students extremely well and work proactively with mentors to identify any students who may require additional support at an early stage. Tutors focus on students' well-being and the progress they are making across the programme and use this information appropriately to allocate additional support where needed. However, arrangements to support students who have poor attendance, before they trigger a formal intervention, are not consistent. Leaders are currently trialling more robust processes designed to improve attendance, but this

work is at an early stage of development. Where needed, the formal university support and intervention process is used well to support students who are facing particularly challenging situations. Cause for concern plans include useful actions and targets which are reviewed regularly in subsequent meetings.

The partnership works effectively with wider university services to support those students who have additional learning needs or identified disabilities. For example, the university disability office provides useful advice and guidance to tutors about what reasonable adjustments need to be in place to support student teachers' needs during their school experiences. Partnership staff work collaboratively with students to ensure that any information that needs to be shared with placement schools is done so sensitively and appropriately.

The partnership's arrangements for safeguarding are robust and give no cause for concern. There are useful university sessions on safeguarding which ensure that students understand their role in keeping young people safe, and students undertake helpful training to help protect pupils from the dangers of radicalisation. Senior mentors ensure that students are fully aware of schools' safeguarding policies and procedures through the induction process at the start of each school experience. PAT Days help students develop an understanding of the wider culture of safeguarding in schools. For example, they benefit from useful sessions about the work of pastoral leaders in schools and how to keep themselves safe.

### **Leadership and management:**

Although the partnership is relatively new, with the PGCE secondary programme accredited in 2020, followed by the commencement of the primary programme in 2022, the Swansea University Schools' Partnership is underpinned firmly by a high level of trust and collaboration. The vision for ITE is clear and well understood, and clearly reflects national educational priorities. Partnership leaders are supported well by senior leaders across the university including the Vice-Chancellor and the faculty leadership team. In particular, the university's senior leaders provide strong support for the development of innovative approaches to enhance students' experiences and outcomes, for example through the use of immersive technology to support the development of mentoring and enhance the learning process.

The partnership is well respected and regarded highly across the wider university, and the expertise of partnership staff is shared beneficially across the school of social sciences, faculty of humanities and social science, and more broadly. For example, imaginative use of the observation classroom supports other areas of the university to develop their skills in formative feedback. In addition, the university-based school education lead has shared effective practice with other faculties in the university such as, the PGCE Primary approach to peer review. Similarly, artificial intelligence expertise from across the university has helped student teachers in particular, to understand and develop an appropriate use of digital tools.

In November 2023 a new ITE senior leadership team was created, including a newly-appointed Director of ITE. This team provides clear and responsive leadership. Leaders are ambitious and have high expectations of themselves and others, modelling professional values and behaviours effectively. Decisions made by the partnership are predicated on the benefit they have on student outcomes and

experiences. For example, partnership leaders take seriously their moral responsibility to spend the budget carefully to ensure that student teachers receive the best value for their money.

The partnership is based on a clear and co-constructed conceptual framework and staff within the partnership are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They are committed to ensuring that student teachers receive the best possible quality of education to enable them to make progress towards the teacher standards and become lifelong learners and successful teachers.

The partnership's work is aligned securely to the current priorities of education in Wales. The promotion of equity and diversity are well-embedded in its programmes and practice. As part of the university's mission to support the national strategy for the Welsh language, senior partnership leaders have developed a clear plan to support student teachers who train to teach through the medium of Welsh and to develop the Welsh language skills of student teachers who teach through the medium of English.

Communication across the partnership is clear and valued by all stakeholders. As a result, members of the partnership understand their own roles and those of others in contributing to the partnership's vision. Communication between the university and schools to support student teachers' well-being is a particular strength. In addition, all stakeholders find the information contained in the weekly bulletin helpful for establishing and maintaining effective working practices. Schools find the partnership's processes and systems for school-based aspects of the programmes manageable and easy to follow. This supports adherence to partnership requirements, such as mentors' completion of weekly reviews of student teachers' progress.

The partnership has an appropriately balanced and valued model of joint leadership where school and university staff appreciate the expertise brought by each other. ITE is central to the work of the school partners. The strategic board and partnership forum are co-chaired beneficially by university and school leaders. Their function is shared suitably between strategic planning and operational matters. Lead partner schools have a clear understanding of the partnership's strategic priorities and contribute to governance arrangements well, for instance as members of the partnership forum. Processes for the selection and de-selection of schools are comprehensive and these arrangements are kept under review well. Leaders in the partnership have a comprehensive understanding of its current financial position and focus carefully on the impact their spending decisions have on the quality of provision and student experience. Contingency planning for the sustainability of the partnership is clear and comprehensive. Finances are targeted well towards the areas most in need of improvement. Senior leaders ensure the partnership collaborates successfully with regional education services and other agencies to build capacity in its lead and network schools, as well as with its own staff, particularly through its innovative research strategy.

The partnership has a clear vision for developing a systematic and collaborative approach to self-evaluation. The newly appointed Director and the senior leadership team have introduced coherent and suitably robust processes to support the partnership's review of its work, though these are at an early stage of

implementation. Recently, the partnership has identified relevant longer-term strategic priorities that take appropriate account of the national and local context for ITE and education in Wales. These are rooted firmly in the partnership's aim to develop research-informed, reflective practitioners.

To evaluate its provision, the partnership draws on a wide range of helpful sources, such as module and placement surveys, external examiner reports, internal university reviews, and feedback from stakeholders. Student teachers make a prominent contribution to the ongoing development of their programmes, for example through representation on the partnership forum and by feeding back their views on the quality of the programmes. While lead partner schools view ITE as one of their core responsibilities, they do not currently play a full role in assuring the quality of the provision or driving forward improvement. Opportunities for them to be involved in self-evaluation to identify the programmes' strengths and weaknesses are limited.

University leaders gather and analyse first-hand evidence well to review the quality of students' learning experiences. For instance, senior leaders, alongside programme directors undertake 'learning walks' to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning on the taught programmes, taking good account of areas for improvement raised through supportive peer observation activities. School leaders, in their roles as chairs of the partnership's committees, are beginning to contribute helpfully to this process. However, overall, the partnership's quality assurance processes, including the school-based moderation of student teachers' progress and learning, are not applied with sufficient consistency or rigour. For example, the purpose, focus and usefulness of partnership staff jointly observing students varies too much between schools and networks. While senior leaders' use of first-hand evidence to verify the effectiveness of mentoring is at an early stage, this has been prioritised as an area for improvement.

Secondary tutors and primary module leaders analyse data related to their areas of responsibility to identify emerging issues in student teachers' academic performance. They bring a high level of expertise to their roles which has resulted in effective provision and practice, particularly in the taught programmes. They adapt their approaches or strengthen module provision in-year, to better support student progress. Operational planning, at programme level, links appropriately with the partnership's overarching priorities. Timescales are realistic and leaders distribute responsibilities for securing improvements appropriately.

The partnership evaluates student teachers' progress towards QTS appropriately. Although the partnership monitors students' progress towards meeting the QTS standards carefully, its knowledge of student teachers' progress in aspects, such as their planning skills, their ability to teach effectively to develop pupils' cross-curricular skills and how well they assess pupils' progress, is more limited. As a result, the partnership does not always identify where there are gaps in provision or less effective practice. This has been recognised by partnership leaders, and there are clear plans to improve this aspect of its work.

The Director of ITE has exceptionally high expectations for tutors' professional practice. He ensures programme teams receive precise, developmental feedback to support improvements to the quality of teaching. This helps, for example, to ensure that teaching approaches support students well to engage successfully with theory

and practice. Since his appointment, the partnership is beginning to consider the purpose of each of its self-evaluation activities and how these might better enable it to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The partnership has recognised the need to synthesise findings from its numerous monitoring activities to support the strategic board to reflect critically on its progress and to help it make informed decisions that drive improvement.

Across the partnership, leaders have created a strong culture of research which is integral to the vision of the programmes. There is a firm, shared belief that building an inclusive scholarly community will benefit the teaching profession and the quality of learning for young people. Research is used effectively to inform the design and ongoing reform of the programmes and their content.

The professional learning needs of all university staff are identified well as part of their professional learning package. They are provided with valuable opportunities to become active researchers, regardless of their role. Tutors receive practical support to enable them to complete research, including having their teaching or administrative workload reduced. As a result, tutors have produced valuable research on a wide variety of topics relevant to their practice, including developing the provision for Welsh medium students, the benefits to pupils of well-being dogs in schools, and the experience of using the observation classroom. They share their enquiries beneficially with their colleagues and students through presentations and research summaries. They also contribute well to the wider sharing of good practice across the university, for example, through online sessions to share and discuss effective examples of collecting and acting on feedback from student teachers. Many tutors work effectively with other partnerships including national collaborative research networks in Wales and beyond.

The partnership provides suitable opportunities for school-based mentors to receive professional learning to develop their roles. University tutors model practice supportively, providing good examples of written and verbal feedback to students. However, not all mentors attend mentor development events regularly enough, and despite efforts by the partnership to provide online resources, a minority of mentors do not develop their skills sufficiently to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. In addition, currently, mentor development focuses too heavily on administrative expectations of the role, rather than the acquisition of high-quality mentoring skills. There are too few opportunities for mentors to collaborate and share effective practice in mentoring within and across networks.

One of the strengths of the partnership is the collaborative research, which effectively engages university staff and lead partnership schools. For example, the Young Educational Researchers Network workshops successfully engage primary school pupils and teachers in research which is purposeful and insightful. Schools within the partnership value the opportunities to share their research and to work alongside highly experienced researchers and experts in their field.



## Evidence base of the report

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet the partnership leaders and individual teacher educators to evaluate the impact of the partnership's work
- meet with senior university leaders and governors to discuss the university's support for initial teacher education
- meet with senior mentors and mentors about the school-based elements of the programme and their assessment of student teachers
- meet student teachers to discuss their progress and to gain their views about various aspects of the partnership
- meet student teachers in leadership roles, such as student representatives
- visit a broad sample of learning sessions and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe students learning and to see staff teaching in school and in university
- observe a sample of students teaching during their final school experience when they are close to achieving Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- observe a sample of mentors feeding back to students about their teaching
- scrutinise students' assignments, reflections and lesson planning
- look closely at the partnership's self-evaluation processes
- consider the partnership's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the partnership has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of partnership documents, including information on student assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and leadership groups, information on students' well-being, including the safeguarding of students and pupils, and records of staff training and professional development
- analyse the outcomes from the student and staff questionnaires and consider their views through their questionnaire responses

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

This report was produced in accordance with section 18c of the Education Act 1994, which was inserted by paragraph 13 of Schedule 14 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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