A report on

CaBan Bangor Partnership

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by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh

About The CaBan Bangor Partnership

The CaBan Bangor Partnership consists of Bangor University, the regional consortium GwE, and the university's Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI), working with 11 lead schools and over 70 partnership schools situated broadly across the north of Wales from east to west. In the university, the Partnership sits within the School of Education, in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

The partnership provides four programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE):

- BA (Hons) primary with QTS
- PGCE primary with QTS
- PGCE secondary with QTS, with pathways in art, biology, chemistry, design and technology, English, geography, history, information technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, outdoor activities, physical education, physics, religious education and Welsh
- PGCE primary with Additional Learning Needs (neurodiversity)

The BA, PGCE primary and PGCE secondary programmes are accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) from 2021. The PGCE primary with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is accredited from 2024.

All programmes are full time and all are offered through Welsh and English. The BA (Hons) primary education programme is a three-year course, the PGCE primary, PGCE primary with ALN and secondary programmes are one-year courses.

In CaBan Bangor, student teachers are referred to as associate teachers.

There are 134 associate teachers following the BA Primary programme, of whom 68 are taking the course through the medium of Welsh. There are 69 associate teachers on the PGCE Primary programme with 26 studying through the medium of Welsh. On the PGCE primary ALN programme, there are 11 associate teachers with 3 undertaking the programme in Welsh. There are 86 associate teachers following the PGCE Secondary programme, of whom 30 are taking the course through the medium of Welsh.

Summary

Provision and practice at the CaBan Bangor Partnership is underpinned by a strong commitment to national priorities, in particular to promotion of the Welsh language. The partnership acknowledges the needs of the local context well and regularly reviews its offer to develop programmes that respond to the needs of the North Wales education community.

Currently, the Partnership is at an important point of transition. Recent circumstances, particularly financial pressures have presented significant challenges. The recently appointed head of school is ambitious for ITE in CaBan Bangor and is already making significant changes. However, it is too early to see the impact of these developments, and although leaders are refining approaches to important aspects of leadership and management functions, this has yet to have a significant impact on practice and provision.

The Partnership's leadership structures are generally suitable. However, in practice, responsibilities and lines of accountability are not always clear. This means that leadership processes do not support strong enough systems to provide clear strategic direction or to drive improvement.

All programmes provide associate teachers with appropriate opportunities to gain Qualified Teacher Status and many make at least adequate progress towards becoming teachers. Many taught sessions provide them with helpful opportunities to explore and develop their practice and understanding. During lead school days, associate teachers are supported well to make links between theory and practice and to gain a good understanding of whole-school issues. However, overall, programmes are not designed coherently enough to enable associate teachers to develop their practice and consolidate and extend their learning. In addition, teaching and mentoring do not reinforce sufficiently well the importance of critical reflection, particularly when planning lessons or completing their Professional Learning Passport (PLP). As a result, associate teachers do not gain a good enough understanding of how to plan lessons effectively, or to improve their teaching.

Building on strengths in the university, the Partnership has developed an enriching culture of professional learning. Staff actively engage in a range of current and relevant research projects, including several at national level. Aspects of this work have a positive impact on ITE. For example, the development of the 'Associate Teacher Stages of Development' matrix provides a helpful guide to support associate teachers' progress. A few tutors make good use of their own research, to enrich learning experiences with their expertise and to model professional practice.

Recommendations

R1   Strengthen leadership and governance across the Partnership

R2   Sharpen self-evaluation and planning for improvement

R3   Improve the quality of teaching and mentoring

R4   Improve the coherency, breadth and depth of the programmes to ensure that associate teachers develop their skills, knowledge and understanding progressively

R5   Deepen associate teachers' critical skills and their understanding of lesson planning processes and to improve their use of the Professional Learning Passport to reflect on their progress

What happens next

The Partnership will draw up an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the partnership's progress in a year's time.

Main findings

Learning:

On all programmes, many associate teachers make at least satisfactory progress and acquire the necessary skills to begin their teaching careers. However, despite achieving the standards required for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), their development from their starting points is often modest.

Many associate teachers plan sequences of lessons that build suitably on pupils' prior learning, demonstrate a sound understanding of progression and are generally suitable for pupils' age and stage of development. They are developing an understanding of how to structure a lesson successfully and to organise pupils, time and resources appropriately. They reflect a suitable awareness of the Curriculum for Wales principles in their planning. Many associate teachers on the secondary PGCE programme have a well-grounded knowledge of their subject, and in a few best examples, associate teachers use their understanding to anticipate pupils' common misconceptions and plan well to address these. For many associate teachers, planning for the development of the cross-curricular skills or literacy, numeracy and digital competence is at an early stage of development.

Many associate teachers make suitable use of the school or subject department's schemes of work to inform their planning, and although a few are beginning to plan with greater autonomy, aligning more imaginative planning with longer-term learning goals, in too many instances associate teachers rely too heavily on the school's plans and pre-existing resources. This limits their creativity.

Many associate teachers have a good awareness of the range of needs and abilities of pupils in their classes. In their lesson plans they often make reference to specific pupils and, in a few cases, associate teachers draw well on assessment and diagnostic information to plan purposefully for individual needs. However, overall, planning for the different needs of pupils tends to be formulaic and lacks precision, with limited consideration of how to challenge more able pupils or to support those with additional needs.

Despite a suitable grasp of the basics of planning, overall, the quality of associate teachers' lesson planning is a common shortcoming. Furthermore, too many do not recognise the importance of thoughtful planning and the identification of precise learning goals and success criteria. Although associate teachers organise suitable learning experiences, in too many instances learning objectives describe tasks, rather than specifying intended learning and the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, they do

not plan the most appropriate teaching and learning approaches for pupil progress, or define assessment opportunities clearly enough.

In their teaching, many associate teachers are becoming confident practitioners, building positive working relationships with their pupils. Many communicate clearly and appropriately, adapting their language well to suit the needs of all pupils, including those with additional learning needs. A majority are effective language role models in English and in Welsh, who use subject-specific vocabulary and promote accuracy in their pupils' literacy skills well.

A majority of associate teachers provide clear instructions and explanations. Where this is strongest, they link learning to the wider curriculum and make connections across subject areas to consolidate pupils' understanding. A few incorporate cultural or contextual aspects to enhance engagement, for example by linking language learning purposefully with developing pupils' knowledge of the culture of the French speaking world.

A majority of associate teachers use a suitable range of strategies to engage pupils and to create a supportive learning environment. They use a variety of resources and engaging activities to stimulate pupils' interest, with a few associate teachers creating imaginative stimuli and supporting pupils' understanding through well-chosen visual or practical demonstrations. A few primary associate teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of learning in the early years, using outdoor spaces and imaginative contexts to enhance learning. They use interactive strategies, such as songs, rhymes and actions, to sustain pupils' interest effectively.

In a few instances, associate teachers use well-prepared and differentiated resources, and show their creativity through designing games, visual aids or scaffolded support that meet the needs of a range of pupils. However, while many associate teachers consider pupils' learning in their planning, they do not provide enough challenge for more able pupils or sufficient next steps for those who complete their work.

A minority of associate teachers use varied questioning strategies that encourage pupils to consider their responses. In the strongest practice, associate teachers' questioning is adaptive and well-targeted, prompts deeper reflection and encourages pupils to explain their reasoning and make connections. A few primary associate teachers make effective use of 'pit-stops' to address misconceptions and exemplify strong responses. However, a minority rely heavily on closed questions, miss opportunities to probe for understanding or focus their questions on a small group of pupils.

In the classroom, a majority of associate teachers manage routines suitably, set clear expectations for behaviour and maintain a purposeful working atmosphere. However, a few associate teachers on the PGCE programmes and a minority on the undergraduate

programme do not manage behaviour well enough, leading to low-level disruption and a lack of pupil engagement. A few struggle to maintain the attention of the whole class. In these cases, a lack of a confident or enthusiastic classroom presence and an over-reliance on support staff reduces the effectiveness of their teaching.

Many associate teachers circulate the classroom well, ensuring that pupils remain engaged in their work. In the few best examples, where associate teachers are clear about the intended learning, they ensure that pupils have a good understanding of the criteria for success and promote learning well through targeted questioning and making the most of judicious opportunities for reflection and refinement. In the most effective cases, associate teachers provide timely feedback to pupils and adapt their teaching in the light of their understanding of pupil progress.

In their university and school-based taught sessions where tutors and mentors encourage them to do so, many associate teachers contribute well to discussions. A majority of associate teachers are articulate and express their ideas clearly and persuasively. Many secondary associate teachers contribute their subject knowledge thoughtfully to subject studies. In a few instances, they make creative connections between their own knowledge and related pedagogy and curriculum links, for example when exploring how pupils' literacy may be developed through approaches to art and design. However, in a few instances, on all programmes, associate teachers do not develop their understanding of the interrelationships of subjects within areas of learning and experience well enough.

Many associate teachers have sound literacy skills in Welsh and English. They have appropriate levels of numeracy and digital skills. However, generally, their ability to plan for and support pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped, particularly in numeracy.

Nearly all associate teachers make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They recognise the importance of developing pupils' oracy skills and in particular, of developing pupils' everyday Welsh on a consistent basis in all language medium schools. Those who are new to the language participate enthusiastically in taught sessions and are eager to improve their pronunciation and verbal communication skills. However, the extent to which associate teachers placed in English-medium schools develop pupils' Welsh language skills is too variable.

In their academic work, many associate teachers reference a suitable range of academic texts, although a minority focus too heavily on a narrow range of sources. A majority of associate teachers do not engage with their reading critically enough, and do not identify the most relevant texts to construct a reasoned argument. As a result, their assignments tend to be superficial in their analysis and they are unable to draw effectively on their findings to support the development of their teaching. Many associate teachers gain a

suitable insight into practitioner enquiry. Most on the undergraduate programme develop a solid understanding of action research approaches that they use to support the development of their teaching. Many associate teachers across all programmes identify an appropriate focus for their enquiries. Often, their research questions are related to the priorities of their placement school, and this helps them to engage beneficially with whole-school issues.

Well-being and attitudes to learning:

Many associate teachers demonstrate a growing awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and feel supported by university and school staff, particularly in managing emotional well-being. These associate teachers have an awareness of the pastoral support available to them, for example those outlined in the Mental Health Strategy Booklet, and are developing suitable strategies to manage their own well-being. Generally, where associate teachers make use of these systems, including those in receipt of personal learning support plans, they value the reasonable adjustments that have been implemented by the partnership to support their individual needs. However, a minority of associate teachers are uncertain about the expectations of their programme, both in school and in university and, as a result, experience difficulty in managing workload pressures.

Most associate teachers feel safe in both school and university. Overall, they feel that they are treated with respect by mentors, tutors and peers, with many describing positive and professional working relationships that help foster a sense of belonging. They are increasingly aware of the beneficial impact that they can have on pupils' behaviour and understand the importance of setting appropriate boundaries and acting as positive role models. However, a majority of associate teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared to manage challenging behaviour while on placement. This leaves them feeling generally underprepared to deal with issues effectively. In general, most associate teachers develop a suitable understanding of child protection and safeguarding procedures. For example, they have an increasing awareness of the signs of radicalisation as part of the school induction process.

Many associate teachers demonstrate a developing understanding of the values and dispositions needed to promote inclusion and challenge inequity. Through a combination of university-led modules, reflective activities and school-based experiences, most have a growing awareness of their professional responsibilities in creating inclusive environments. They are beginning to consider how factors such as disadvantage and social and emotional well-being can have an impact on pupils' engagement.

Associate teachers appreciate the opportunity they have to provide feedback via their programme representatives. Where appropriate, feedback provided by student

representatives through the Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLiC) has led to helpful amendments, such as the inclusion of additional modules in ALN on Year 3 of the undergraduate programme. However, a minority of associate teachers feel that their feedback is not always sufficiently acted upon, for instance following their evaluations of taught modules and school experience.

Generally, associate teachers demonstrate professional attitudes, a developing understanding of pastoral duties, good attendance and responsiveness to feedback. In a minority of instances, associate teachers make good use of the tracking framework across the eight stages of teacher development helpful for guiding their professional growth.

Most associate teachers demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and conduct themselves appropriately and professionally across university and school settings. Generally, they contribute meaningfully to and engage well with lead school days, with a minority participating enthusiastically during university sessions. Overall, associate teachers' rates of attendance and punctuality are good.

During their school placements, many associate teachers establish respectful and productive relationships with school-based colleagues, mentors and peers, contributing suitably to reflective discussions. Many associate teachers are keen to engage in joint planning and classroom activities, with most valuing the opportunity to observe experienced colleagues. This helps them to consider theory meaningfully within authentic classroom contexts. Most value the opportunities to attend school-based activities, such as INSET days and departmental meetings enabling them to gain an understanding of whole-school issues.

Many associate teachers, particularly those on the undergraduate programme, are beginning to develop their leadership skills appropriately by collaborating with school staff to lead learning activities and contribute to wider school life, such as involvement in extra-curricular activities. In general, associate teachers increasingly recognise how planning with mentors, participating in lead school days, and engaging with school procedures helps to support their confidence and emerging professional identity.

Overall, most associate teachers demonstrate a developing professional commitment to reflective practice using tools, such as journals, mentor feedback and reflective conversations to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching. Where reflection is most effective, associate teachers analyse their classroom practice critically, make appropriate links to theoretical frameworks, and set meaningful targets to improve key aspects such as questioning. However, many associate teachers engage only superficially with reflective processes. They focus too heavily on descriptions of teaching activities rather than evaluating their impact on pupil learning or the relationships

between effective teaching and pupils' progress. Furthermore, they make insufficient links to their reading or observations of other practitioners.

Generally, many associate teachers demonstrate appropriate organisational skills and are diligent in planning lessons and completing assignments. They are conscientious in undertaking self-evaluations of their assignments and identify suitable areas for improvement. However, they do not always improve their own work successfully, and this is partly due to a lack of precise enough feedback from their tutors for their academic work. In addition, many associate teachers struggle to evidence their progress through their PLP effectively and a few do not demonstrate sufficient responsibility for their progress. This hinders associate teachers' ability to develop their ideas and skills efficiently.

Teaching and learning experiences:

Initial teacher education programmes at CaBan Bangor are underpinned appropriately by key values and principles. They have been co-constructed by teachers and university tutors and aim to bring together practical experiences with an exploration of educational theory. All programmes make suitable and clear reference to national priorities, in particular, they promote the language and culture of Wales very well. The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for associate teachers to achieve QTS. Generally, core aspects of the university-taught and school-based experiences are interlinked suitably.

The taught programme is informed appropriately by theory to support associate teachers to make links between theory and practice during lead school days. These sessions are planned purposefully to enrich the university taught programme and associate teachers value the practical experiences that these days provide. Lead school days support associate teachers effectively to develop a broader understanding of pedagogy and important aspects, such as additional learning needs and developing positive working relationships. In addition, they benefit from worthwhile opportunities to observe and share practice across sectors.

Despite these links, overall, programmes are not planned coherently enough. They do not always provide associate teachers with a wide enough range of experiences to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in sufficient depth and breadth. There is not always enough time allocated to allow associate teachers to revisit key concepts within the university taught part of the programme and develop their discipline-specific pedagogy well enough during school experiences. Where associate teachers have been given opportunities to work across phases, they do not develop key competencies in sufficient depth to teach effectively in both phases.

The programme provides appropriate opportunities for associate teachers to engage with Curriculum for Wales to support them to develop their knowledge and understanding of the four purposes and the pedagogical principles. For example, secondary associate teachers have suitable opportunities to engage with subject-specific classroom practice through subject enrichment days. However, in a few instances, the programmes do not support associate teachers to evaluate the different approaches to planning and teaching. In some cases, associate teachers develop misconceptions around Curriculum for Wales, which are not addressed well enough in the programme.

The provision for the development of associate teachers' Welsh language skills within the university-taught and lead school sessions is effective. Associate teachers benefit from the expertise of staff who support their progress against the Welsh language competency framework. They feel well supported in developing their Welsh skills and show positive attitudes towards the language. As a result, nearly all make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

There are suitable systems and processes in place to support associate teachers to audit and develop their personal skills, including literacy, numeracy, digital competence and Welsh language skills. Targeted interventions, which are brokered in response to individual needs, range from taught sessions during 'callback days' (when associate teachers return to university from their school experiences), to signposting online resources. However, there is limited evidence in PLPs of how associate teachers use these skills in practice or how they plan to support the progressive development of pupils' skills.

Across all programmes, nearly all tutors establish purposeful working relationships with associate teachers, built on mutual trust and respect. Many tutors have a sound understanding of associate teachers' individual needs and promote a culture that encourages most to express their opinions and share their views confidently.

Most tutors have good knowledge and understanding of their subject or phase, and many draw upon their pedagogical knowledge to inform their teaching appropriately. A minority of tutors are flexible and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of associate teachers appropriately. Many tutors make clear reference to relevant academic literature and theory. For example, PGCE English secondary associate teachers' pre-reading and planning tasks prior to attending the taught sessions support their understanding of drama and where it can be incorporated into curricular provision. A few tutors make very good use of their own personal research and that of others within the university to engage students and to model professional practice suitably. For example, BA (Hons) associate teachers discuss research into self-efficacy and the 'Locus of Control' and how this can support how they plan their provision to meet the needs of pupils appropriately.

In the few strongest examples, taught sessions have clear learning objectives, tutors have high expectations, and activities build well on prior learning. For example, tutors link theory relating to the curriculum with practice and make useful connections between the university-led sessions and the school experiences. A few tutors employ a suitable range of questioning strategies that support associate teachers to think critically and reflect purposefully upon their practice. For example, during PGCE secondary sessions, tutors probe associate teachers' thinking skilfully and encourage them to consider why a variety of teaching and learning approaches are effective and where they are more limited. These sessions are helpfully solution-focused, such as when associate teachers analyse and discuss classroom management strategies they can apply to a range of scenarios.

In the few strongest examples, tutors provide useful feedback during university-based sessions that supports associate teachers to reflect helpfully on their progress. However, in a very few instances, verbal feedback from tutors, for example during associate teachers' assessed presentations, is often overly positive and does not support associate teachers to critically evaluate their work and make improvements. A minority of tutors model good practice for students explicitly, such as when supporting undergraduate associate teachers to discuss what effective assessment approaches look like and how these can be used successfully in classrooms.

Despite these strengths, a few areas require further attention. In a few sessions, tutors do not address associate teachers' misconceptions well enough, for example, in particular, misunderstandings around the four purposes, and the progression steps. In general, opportunities to develop associate teachers' deeper conceptual understanding and to support them to make effective links between theory and effective classroom practice are limited. In a majority of sessions, tutors spend too long presenting and sharing information and, as a result, opportunities for associate teachers to engage in meaningful group activities are limited. During a few undergraduate sessions, learning activities do not challenge associate teachers' thinking and problem-solving skills sufficiently. Often, the learning environment inhibits tutors' abilities to facilitate interactive and practical activities.

Many tutors provide detailed and generally helpful written feedback on associate teachers' assignments. They mark against clear criteria that support associate teachers' understanding of approaches to research in particular. Although tutors' feedback identifies areas for improvement, it does not support associate teachers' development well enough by guiding them towards specific strategies for improvement, and many targets are too broad, such as 'be more analytical'. In a few instances, tutors' marking does not pick up well enough on associate teachers' misunderstandings, for example around curriculum planning. On the undergraduate programme, tutors have explored recorded

verbal feedback, providing comments in context. This helps associate teachers to know more precisely where they need to improve.

Nearly all mentors are committed to their roles and establish a purposeful environment that supports most associate teachers suitably on their school or centre experience. A majority of mentors have a suitable understanding of associate teachers' progress and offer suitable advice and strategies that help them to reflect on prior targets and improve their practice over time. These mentors identify the main strengths and areas for development accurately when giving feedback to associate teachers after observing lessons or sessions. Generally, secondary subject mentors focus suitably on subject pedagogy and use their expertise well. On the whole, mentors use the Partnership's supporting materials appropriately to guide feedback sessions.

In most cases, mentors provide helpful and regular written evaluations. They co-construct basic targets alongside associate teachers based on a few identified areas for development in general aspects of teaching, such as classroom management, developing the learning environment and preparing resources.

In the few cases where mentoring is strong, mentors have high expectations and purposefully support associate teachers to strive for continuous improvement. These mentors facilitate effective learning conversations with skilful questioning. They engage associate teachers in critical thinking and support the development of their problem-solving and self-reflection skills successfully. In these instances, mentors encourage associate teachers to consider the cause and effect in their teaching and to make useful connections between theory and practice. A minority of mentors promote associate teachers' research into effective classroom practice well through supporting them beneficially in their individual inquiry projects. In a few instances, mentors make valuable use of the Partnership's 'Associate Teacher Stages of Development' matrix, which provides a helpful guide to support associate teachers' progress. In the very few of the best examples, principal mentors and mentors collaborate thoughtfully within their settings to improve their own practice. For example, they conduct joint lesson observations to moderate evaluations and feedback and consider how mentoring may be developed.

A minority of mentors' feedback is, at times, overly positive and often does not address important areas, such as associate teachers' misconceptions, gaps in subject knowledge and shortcomings in teaching such as effective planning and meeting the needs of all learners appropriately. As a result, although targets are set regularly, they are often broad or ambiguous, making it difficult to plan effective strategies to address important areas for development.

Where learning conversations are less effective, mentors tend to engage in a monologue that restricts opportunities for associate teachers to reflect critically on their own practice.

A majority of mentors do not model effective reflection consistently enough. In these instances, discussions focus more on pupil engagement and task completion rather than on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning and progress. In a minority of examples, learning conversations do not reinforce professional expectations appropriately, for example around lesson planning or completing the PLP. Too many mentors have insufficient knowledge of the sequencing of taught sessions on the programme and this restricts their ability to reinforce associate teachers' understanding.

Care, support and guidance:

In general, university and school-based staff support associate teachers well to develop the values and dispositions required to become a teacher in Wales. A focus on developing these professional attitudes and traits is embedded appropriately across the BA and PGCE programmes. The 'Associate teachers' stages of development' descriptors provide a clear trajectory that outlines how associate teachers are expected to demonstrate increasing understanding as they move through their programme. Associate teachers benefit from useful opportunities to explore their own values and reflect on their responsibilities as teachers, particularly through the Professional, Pedagogy and Core Studies modules. These modules support the Partnership's ambition to help associate teachers to become reflective practitioners who understand how education is planned, delivered and evaluated. Nearly all mentors have high expectations of associate teachers' professional conduct and induction arrangements are generally effective in ensuring that associate teachers understand what is expected of them in settings.

The Partnership's approach to supporting associate teachers in evaluating their progress against the professional standards for QTS is not sufficiently robust. There is a lack of shared understanding among staff about who is responsible for guiding associate teachers to use their PLPs effectively. In most cases, tutors, mentors and principal mentors do not routinely review how well associate teachers are evidencing their progress against the standards.

The Partnership places a suitable emphasis on developing associate teachers' research and enquiry skills. Across the programmes, associate teachers are encouraged to engage with a wide range of relevant educational literature and to consider how theory informs practice. Module handbooks include useful core reading lists, and taught sessions often make purposeful links to research. In the best examples, tutors draw on their own research to stimulate critical thinking and discussion. Assignments, such as the case study on supporting pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), provide valuable opportunities for associate teachers to link research with their placement experiences. Despite these strengths, most associate teachers do not make strong enough connections between theory and practice in their day-to-day planning or reflections. While many mentors say that they feel confident in supporting associate teachers to explore the relationship

between theory and classroom practice, few make these links explicit during mentoring sessions.

Associate teachers have a few worthwhile opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Associate teachers have the opportunity to serve as representatives on Partnership leadership and management groups and have made worthwhile contributions, such as shaping clearer expectations for staff communication. Lead school days provide beneficial opportunities for associate teachers to consider themes related to leadership and innovation in teaching. They also receive helpful preparation on future careers through sessions focused on applying for teaching posts, preparing for interviews, and working with career advisers. School-based mentors support associate teachers well in this process and provide a supportive environment for practice interviews and professional dialogue.

Programmes include useful opportunities for associate teachers to explore the diverse nature of the school population in Wales and to consider issues of equity and inclusion. Sessions within taught modules encourage associate teachers to engage with topics such as poverty and its impact on learning. The Partnership also makes effective use of external organisations, for example to support its work to promote diversity and inclusion in schools. Across all programmes, associate teachers gain a secure understanding of the pastoral responsibilities of teachers through a combination of taught sessions and school placement experiences.

Across university and school settings, staff are mindful of the pressures faced by associate teachers and offer a range of formal and informal support for their well-being. Personal tutors are accessible and provide valued support throughout the programme. Most subject and principal mentors also support associate teachers' well-being effectively during placements, and there is productive collaboration between school and university staff when concerns arise. The wider university provides a useful range of services to meet the broader welfare needs of associate teachers, including counselling, financial advice and support for housing. These are introduced during induction and tutors provide timely signposting, when needed. If incidents of bullying or harassment occur, there are clear escalation procedures and robust systems to ensure appropriate support and accountability. This reflects a strong commitment to inclusivity and student welfare across the Partnership. Tutors monitor attendance closely through the 'My Bangor' system. There is an appropriate attendance policy specific to the ITE programmes, including a sensible graduated response to any concerns.

There are suitable systems to identify associate teachers who may require enhanced support. University staff and mentors collaborate to ensure early identification and agree interventions. In general, mentors report that Partnership processes and plans to support struggling associate teachers are appropriate. However, the quality and consistency of

these plans vary across programmes and placement settings. In particular, associate teachers on enhanced support do not always receive enough additional professional learning tailored to their needs, and mentors report variable support from university tutors when implementing these plans. Associate teachers with additional learning needs are supported appropriately through Personal Learning Support Plans, developed in Partnership with the university's disability service. These plans outline necessary adjustments and are generally well implemented by school-based staff. Most associate teachers with additional needs feel well supported.

Safeguarding arrangements across the Partnership are robust and give no cause for concern. All staff and associate teachers receive appropriate training, including on their responsibilities under the Prevent duty. Associate teachers benefit from useful input on child protection and recognising signs of abuse, and they feel confident in knowing how to raise concerns. In general, safeguarding is well embedded in both university and school contexts. However, associate teachers, particularly those placed in special school settings as part of the ALN programme, are not always clear on how to respond to pupils displaying challenging physical behaviour and receive limited training on positive handling techniques.

Leadership and management:

Senior leaders at the university recognise their role in contributing to teacher education and the Welsh language and are dedicated to serving the North Wales community. They demonstrate a clear commitment to the Welsh education system and are considering how the ITE Partnership operates in Wales in light of system-wide changes in education. Overall, their strategic priorities are sensible and align with national priorities.

The university's approach to ITE demonstrates a clear commitment to supporting the development of aspiring teachers. Its articulation of the 'student journey' offers a helpful conceptual framework for the trajectory of learning and development expected of associate teachers over the course of their training. However, this vision is not always clearly understood or consistently used across the Partnership to shape learning experiences or to monitor student progress effectively.

The governance structure, comprising the University Executive Board, CaBan Management group, quality assurance (QAQE) group and operational groups, provides a suitable framework for oversight. However, there is considerable duplication of roles across strategic groups, and responsibilities are not always clear. Leaders have identified a few strengths and areas for improvement across the programme. Strategic decision-making is hampered by infrequent meetings of the management board, which limits its ability to provide effective challenge or direction to operational groups. As a result, they do not focus well enough on important areas, such as the quality of teaching and mentoring.

Leaders acknowledge that the Partnership is at an important stage of transition. The new head of school has a suitable vision for the future and there is active consideration of the Partnership's strategic aims. Leaders have identified the need for change and recent structural reforms, marketing improvements and refinements to the Partnership's strategic vision are focused on addressing challenges with a view to long-term sustainability. However, due to a challenging financial environment, these changes remain in flux.

In general, leaders are open to feedback and recognise the need to enhance leadership capacity within ITE. Efforts to strengthen relationships with schools and increase their role in the Partnership are ongoing. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out roles and responsibilities clearly and is used appropriately for selecting partner schools. There are appropriate processes for selection and deselection of partner schools.

The Partnership has taken steps to co-construct provision with schools, and stakeholders appreciate the inclusive and collegiate ethos this fosters. Relationships across the Partnership are positive, particularly between programme directors and lead network mentors, who collaborate well on designing school-based components of the programme. However, there is too much variation between programmes in how well leaders collaborate, especially in the primary context.

Leadership roles within the Partnership are not always appropriately balanced. There is an over-reliance on individuals, which creates sustainability risks. While mentors and school leaders are enthusiastic and committed, their understanding of the wider programme and their contribution to strategic priorities varies.

Financial oversight is appropriate, with funding used proportionately to support schools in their responsibilities and supporting associate teachers' learning. The Partnership focuses suitably on recruitment and, despite broader challenges in recruiting students to secondary subject areas, the university has effectively targeted recruitment to primary PGCE programmes, particularly in Welsh-medium streams. In the current climate of reducing budgets, staff absence has been particularly challenging to manage effectively, and this has had an impact on the consistency of programme delivery.

The Partnership's steps to promote the Welsh language and encourage bilingual training routes are a strength. Associate teachers are encouraged to develop their Welsh language proficiency, and the importance of Welsh-medium teaching is embedded in the Partnership's priorities.

The Partnership collects a wide range of data and uses it to monitor patterns in associate teacher recruitment, retention and outcomes. Staff analyse this information at programme, group and individual levels. They often break it down appropriately by

characteristics, such as whether associate teachers speak Welsh or English as their first language, or whether they have previous experience of working in schools. This helps the Partnership to identify patterns in how different groups of associate teachers progress through the programme, including where they are more or less likely to succeed. These actions reflect the early development of an evidence-based approach to monitoring the Partnership's progress against key performance indicators. However, the use of this information to strengthen support for associate teachers, or to improve the quality of teaching, is limited.

Leaders are starting to reflect on the long-term aims of the Partnership, particularly in response to national changes in education. They are beginning to consider how to adapt aspects of programme design, for example in preparation for reaccreditation of the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In a few cases, they make small changes to provision in response to feedback from students and mentors during the year, for instance by adjusting the order of teaching sessions or the content of lead school days. Leaders are open to external views and recognise that the Partnership is in a period of change. While these steps show a willingness to engage with evaluation, the Partnership's actions are not yet developed well enough to support a strategic approach to improvement.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning are supported by a range of processes intended to help leaders and staff identify the Partnership's strengths and areas for improvement. However, systems are overly complex and not applied consistently. Leaders and staff report their findings through multiple processes, which results in overlapping, and sometimes conflicting, improvement plans. This makes it difficult for the Partnership to identify the most pressing priorities or to track the impact of its actions over time. In a few instances, important aspects of the Partnership's work appear as both strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, self-evaluation processes do not support clear, strategic planning or drive improvement.

The Partnership carries out helpful reviews in a few areas, for example relating to associate teacher well-being and approaches to assessment, but overall its evaluative work lacks depth and consistency. Leaders do not draw well enough on a broad and reliable range of information to understand precisely what is working and what needs to improve. In particular, leaders do not consider how effective each aspect of the programme is in supporting associate teachers' development. They rely too heavily on associate teacher feedback and do not use first-hand evidence, such as direct observation, to evaluate important areas of the university-based provision, such as the quality of teaching or the relevance of module content.

As part of emerging quality assurance arrangements, a few tutors visit schools to observe mentoring practice. In these instances, they provide useful written observations, often

describing how mentors support associate teachers during learning conversations about their development. In the best cases, tutors highlight effective features, such as mentoring that is dialogic in nature, and focused on pupils' learning and progress in response to associate teachers' teaching. This work represents a helpful step towards gathering first-hand evidence of practice. Internal reporting processes provide further insight into mentoring and occasionally highlight clear areas for development, such as the need to improve the consistency of mentors' written feedback and support for the development of associate teachers' reflection skills. However, the Partnership does not apply these quality assurance processes consistently across all schools. While programme leaders share updates with governance groups, those involved do not explore the evidence in enough depth or follow it up with targeted action. As a result, the Partnership does not make effective use of its internal evaluation processes to secure timely improvements in mentoring practice, either in individual schools or across the Partnership.

A few principal mentors and network leads have a broad awareness of the Partnership's current areas for development. However, overall, school-based staff are not involved sufficiently in evaluating the Partnership's provision or contributing to improvement planning. There is little collaboration across partner schools, and mentors have very few opportunities to share effective practice. As a result, the Partnership does not make full use of the insight and experience of its school partners. Currently, there are no clear systems to support joint strategic planning or shared accountability for self-evaluation across the Partnership. This lack of co-ordinated involvement limits its ability to plan coherently for improvement or to build collective ownership of its strategic direction.

The Partnership has created a culture of professional learning and has recently appointed a Director of Professional Learning to develop opportunities for staff. While this role is still new and evolving, it reflects the Partnership's clear commitment to ongoing professional development. Processes for the induction and training of tutors are appropriate and closely aligned with university expectations. The recent move to the College Road site has strengthened the sense of community among university-based staff by providing greater opportunities for tutors to collaborate on research projects. Across the Partnership, there is a notable emphasis on developing staff and associate teachers' bilingualism. This includes bespoke training and targeted support afforded to those learning the Welsh language. However, its impact is not clearly reflected in how tutors model language use during lectures.

The refined Performance and Development Review process is in its early stages and encourages university-based staff to reflect on module feedback from associate teachers. The Partnership has collaborated closely with regional consortia, to provide trauma-informed practice to support pupil well-being, and to align with national priorities for ITE

in Wales. As a result, a minority of staff are well informed about current national agendas and are equipped with appropriate knowledge and understanding.

The Partnership has adopted an approach to mentoring that is based on professional dialogue and collaborative reflection. Partnership leaders have taken a proactive approach to training school-based mentors and have increased the numbers of mentors trained, through both annual and 'top-up' training sessions. The impact of this on associate teachers is in its early stages, as mentors differ in how consistently they apply the intended mentoring model.

The Partnership has developed a range of useful asynchronous professional learning resources for mentors. However, opportunities to deepen mentoring skills and expertise, and provide opportunities to share good practice, are limited. Although the Partnership has taken steps to support professional learning of mentors, notably with university tutors providing feedback during school visits, mentors are not suitably aware of how well they are performing in their roles. Currently, there are no formal structures in place to facilitate engagement between mentors, the Lead Partner Schools, or other Partner Schools.

University-based Partnership staff actively engage in a wide range of current and relevant research projects, including several at national level, such as the use of digital pedagogies and supporting refugee learners. This contributes positively to the ongoing professional development and knowledge enhancement of staff. Over the past year, the Partnership has introduced the role of the 'research champion' to strengthen research capacity within schools, to foster innovative practices and to provide targeted support for staff development. However, the research culture promoted by research champions is at an early stage of development. In a very few cases, school-based mentors have benefited from advanced qualifications that are offered through the Partnership.

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)

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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