

A report on
University of South Wales Initial Teacher Education
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 University of South Wales Initial Teacher Education Partnership

The University of South Wales Partnership comprises the University of South Wales, nine lead schools and seventy-five network schools situated across south-east Wales. In the university, the partnership is based in the School of Education, Early years and Social Work, which sits within the Faculty of Life Sciences and Education.

The partnership provides two programmes. The BA (Hons) Primary Initial Teacher Education with QTS undergraduate programme was accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in 2020. Following accreditation, the PGCE Primary programme began in 2022.

Both programmes are full-time courses. The undergraduate programme is a three-year course and the PGCE is a one-year course. Both programmes are offered with options to study through the medium of Welsh.

There are 37 students following the PGCE Primary programme, of whom three are taking the course through the medium of Welsh. There are 170 students on the BA (Hons) Primary Initial Teacher Education with QTS programme with 14 studying through the medium of Welsh.

Summary

The University of Wales Partnership of initial teacher education (ITE) is built on a well-established affiliation between the University of South Wales and its partner schools. The partnership is based on an underlying principle of ‘communities of learning’, and there are strong working relationships, characterised by mutual trust between tutors, mentors and students. As a result of strong personal and professional support, student teachers have excellent attitudes to learning and are strongly motivated to become effective practitioners.

Most student teachers make at least suitable progress on both programmes. They benefit from the strong personal commitment of their tutors and mentors, which helps them to develop their teaching skills appropriately. However, inconsistencies in teaching and learning experiences limit their progress, particularly in developing their planning and critical thinking skills.

Elements of the taught programme provide stimulating learning experiences for student teachers. Many aspects reflect the university’s vision ‘to change lives and our world for the better’. Teaching experiences are rooted in an ambition for students to understand the context in which they are working and to meet the needs of their pupils. ‘Synergy Days’ in school help them to make links between theory and practice, and university taught sessions where tutors share their expertise and model effective practice support students’ development. Provision for developing students’ Welsh language skills and opportunities to understand the context of their school experience schools are both strong aspects of the provision. However, overall, both programmes are not structured effectively enough to help students to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a suitably progressive or sequential way.

Although mentors are committed and conscientious, in around half of cases, they do not support students well enough in aspects of their development. In the main, this is because their feedback is too focused on the professional standards and not tailored specifically enough to supporting students with developing important aspects of their practice such as planning or developing pupils’ skills.

Leadership of the partnership has recently undergone significant change. The recently appointed Director of ITE is committed to improvement and has undertaken important work to strengthen the leadership and management of the partnership. However, this is at an early stage, and despite recent developments to leadership structures and processes, shortcomings in areas such as mentoring, self-evaluation and quality assurance have not yet been sufficiently addressed.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the coherency of the programme design so that the sequencing of learning enables students to deepen their understanding and supports their critical reflection
- R2 Strengthen leadership at all levels across the partnership
- R3 Improve processes for self-evaluation and planning for improvement
- R4 Improve the quality of teaching and mentoring to focus on the progressive development of students' skills, knowledge and understanding
- R5 Improve students' understanding of short, medium and long-term planning across the curriculum

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:

Most student teachers make at least suitable progress towards meeting the standards for QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) with around half of students on both programmes making stronger progress and a few achieving very well.

Overall, student teachers on both programmes have a growing understanding of effective lesson planning. Many work closely with their mentors to design lessons that are organised effectively and are appropriately challenging for pupils' ages and stages of ability. Many students plan coherent sequences of lessons that are logically structured and allow for the appropriate progression in pupils' learning over time. Their plans reflect the principles of the Curriculum for Wales suitably, for example by considering thematic approaches and cross-cutting skills, and align well with school schemes of learning. In around half of cases, students' planning in the non-core areas such as expressive arts or humanities is particularly creative, especially when they draw upon their own interests and experiences. In the few best examples, student teachers take an original approach to planning. They introduce innovative or culturally relevant content, adapting school schemes and incorporating, for example, contemporary issues, personal experiences or local history to stimulate pupils' curiosity and engagement. However, in too many instances, students are over-reliant on published schemes or the schools' learning plans and this leads to formulaic teaching and missed opportunities for responding to pupils' needs and interests.

Around half of student teachers identify clear learning goals supported by well-considered success criteria in their lesson plans. However, a common shortcoming in lesson planning is that students do not identify learning objectives or success criteria precisely enough. In addition, a majority of students reference the Curriculum for Wales superficially, for example by including objectives for the four purposes in each lesson, or citing the progression steps as success criteria. As a result, these students do not plan for pupils' learning sufficiently, limiting their ability to identify the most effective teaching approaches and assessment opportunities. Around half of students consider the needs of different abilities in their classes well. They plan for the support of teaching assistants, organise pupils into ability groups and use information, such as reading age data, to create differentiated resources to engage pupils of different abilities effectively. However, a minority of students plan too superficially to meet pupils' needs. They do not provide clear practical strategies to engage all pupils in their learning and do not define the roles of other adults in the classroom well enough. In a minority of instances, students' planning is overly ambitious, attempting to cover too much in a single session.

In the classroom, most student teachers form strong, supportive relationships with pupils, fostering a positive learning environment. Many establish a classroom presence that encourages pupils' trust and engagement. They manage classroom routines confidently and use a range of effective strategies, positive reinforcement, group rewards and behaviour expectations such as 'amser tacluso' to maintain engagement and promote learning.

Many student teachers communicate clearly and are positive language role models. They give well-structured explanations and instructions. In the few strongest instances, this includes modelling subject-specific vocabulary and how to construct an effective verbal response. Many students use a variety of questions to support the recall of prior learning and to prompt discussion. In a minority of cases, students are responsive in their questioning and prompt deeper reflection, encouraging pupils to articulate their reasoning. Around half of students make the most of opportunities to assess pupils' progress during the lesson, encouraging self-evaluation and promoting learning. A few student teachers respond flexibly to pupils' learning, adapt their teaching and adjust tasks in response to pupils' progress.

In a minority of cases, usually because learning goals are unclear, students' classroom management is less secure. They do not respond quickly enough to low-level disruption, or they fail to maintain momentum in lessons. In a few instances, students do not structure their lessons effectively enough and pupils become disengaged due to a slow pace of teaching or over-long starter tasks. A few student teachers struggle with their classroom presence. They do not use their voice well enough to manage pupils and do not routinely scan the classroom to ensure that pupils are engaged.

A minority of students over-direct pupils' learning, leaving little room for independence, exploration or peer collaboration. A few do not have a secure enough grasp of aspects of the curriculum, in particular in literacy, mathematics and science. As a result, they misuse terminology, make grammatical errors in Welsh and English or fail to pick up on pupils' misconceptions.

Generally, those students learning Welsh make suitable progress in developing their language skills. Students on the undergraduate programme are more proficient in their use of everyday Welsh than those on the postgraduate programme, and around half are confident to use some basic Welsh commands and phrases in the classroom and highlight key vocabulary effectively.

Most postgraduate students and a majority of undergraduate students have sound skills in literacy, and generally they support the development of pupils' skills suitably. A few students on both programmes have weak numeracy skills, and this inhibits their ability to plan successfully. Most students have at least adequate digital skills which they use both

to develop pupils' proficiencies and to enhance their teaching through the use of interactive resources. A few students have particularly strong digital skills, which they use effectively in school, both in their teaching and in supporting other staff.

In their taught sessions in university and in school, many students are thoughtful and reflective. In many sessions, they are articulate and express their ideas with enthusiasm. Overall, they develop their understanding of curriculum and key pedagogies suitably, although their progress is inconsistent across areas of learning, due to shortcomings in programme design and learning experiences.

In their academic work, many students are conscientious. They generally write clearly and are beginning to engage critically with a suitable range of sources. A minority of students demonstrate a high level of understanding, drawing ideas together fluently and constructing a cogent argument. Most undergraduate students fulfil the requirements of their action research projects well, demonstrating a suitable understanding of research presentation and methods. Students on the postgraduate programme value the opportunity to explore the education theories underpinning approaches to teaching, such as considering effective learning experiences for pupils with English as an additional language. However, overall, student teachers do not use what they have learned from their reading and research well enough to inform their classroom practice.

Well-being and attitudes to learning:

Nearly all student teachers consistently demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning and a strong commitment to a career in teaching. They have a secure understanding of their professional responsibilities, including the safeguarding of pupils, and develop personal and professional behaviours, which prepare them well for a career in teaching.

Overall, students demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of managing their own well-being, and most feel supported to maintain a healthy work-life balance through a combination of regular tutor check-ins, pastoral support systems, and well-being sessions provided by the university. Student teachers who encounter barriers to learning benefit from timely and well-considered support from the university, which enables them to sustain their progress effectively.

Nearly all student teachers establish positive and productive relationships with pupils during their school placements. They demonstrate an increasingly secure understanding of the important link between pupils' well-being and their capacity to engage effectively in learning. As a result, student teachers are beginning to design meaningful learning experiences that help pupils explore themes such as identity, emotions and self-confidence.

When provided with appropriate opportunities, students take on leadership roles in university and in schools. Student representatives contribute to partnership leadership groups and make valued contributions to the operational delivery of programmes. In schools, students confidently share their expertise with school staff in areas such as Welsh and digital competence as well as taking on responsibilities to lead pupil clubs and events successfully, such as coffee mornings. Nearly all students engage well in wider school life and benefit from professional learning opportunities in school to enhance their understanding of teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Relationships between student teachers, tutors, and mentors are a notable strength of the partnership, with nearly all students reporting that they feel safe, supported, and respected both in university and during school placements. These trusting and professional relationships create a culture where students feel able to engage openly in reflective dialogue and seek guidance when needed. Most student teachers are conscientious and responsive to advice and guidance. When faced with personal and professional challenges they show resilience and determination to continue with their chosen career.

Nearly all students collaborate well with their peers and benefit from learning from one another. They value the strong professional relationships they establish with tutors and school-based mentors, recognising how they can draw on professional expertise to support their learning effectively, for example through planning alongside their mentors. This culture of trust and collaboration ensures that students feel well supported to develop their pedagogical practice.

Most student teachers engage in taught sessions enthusiastically, showing confidence when engaging in discussions about key aspects of the Welsh education system, such as Curriculum for Wales and wider national priorities. Many articulate their perspectives in a reflective and thoughtful manner and show respect for their peers and tutors. Most respond constructively to feedback and strive to incorporate advice and guidance from tutors and mentors into their assignments and teaching.

Many students develop their professional dispositions and values well and demonstrate a commitment to inclusion in their assignments and lesson planning. They have a suitable awareness of children's rights and legislation, such as how the Well-being of Future Generations Act impacts on their teaching. They contribute enthusiastically to their 'communities of learning' and are beginning to gain a good understanding of the potential barriers to learning due to inequity. Where appropriate, a minority of student teachers reflect well on the context of their school and tailor their teaching approaches in consideration of the lives of children in their classes.

Over the duration of their programme, most students improve their ability to reflect on their practice and evaluate their lessons diligently. They are increasingly able to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching and use a range of reflective models to help them shape their reflections. Many, particularly those on the PGCE programme, use the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) conscientiously to track their progress in a meaningful way. In a few instances, students make clear links to intended learning and critically evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching on pupil learning. However, in general student reflections are too often focused on describing their approaches to teaching and classroom management rather than critically engaging with the impact of their planning and teaching on pupil learning.

Nearly all students welcome the support they receive from tutors and mentors to help them engage critically with research. They enjoy the opportunities available to them to carry out close to practice research and investigations of the effectiveness of specific strategies, for instance to improve reading. However, the majority of student teachers are not sufficiently critical when considering the outcomes of their inquiries.

Nearly all students recognise that good attendance at taught sessions and their school placements is an expectation of the programme. Student teachers whose attendance has been affected by illness or personal circumstances engage well with support and programme modifications to ensure that they achieve the required days in school. However, a few students do not show enough commitment to attending all university-based sessions.

Teaching and learning experiences:

The undergraduate and postgraduate programmes support student teachers suitably to develop the knowledge and understanding needed to teach in line with the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. Over time, both programmes provide opportunities for student teachers to develop an appropriate knowledge of effective teaching in the primary phase. The undergraduate programme enables student teachers to develop an understanding of topics relative to the phases. Overall, it is structured appropriately. However, the programme does not always maximise opportunities to return to themes and concepts in a progressive way to build students' knowledge, skills and understanding sequentially. In the PGCE programme, in particular, there is a lack of coherency and logical progression to the programme design. Some aspects are covered in insufficient depth, while a few sessions are focused on advanced approaches such as the use of specialist teaching programmes to support language development.

There are beneficial opportunities for students to develop an understanding of what it means to be a teacher in Wales. Modules in both programmes provide exposure to the key elements of the Curriculum for Wales including the four purposes, cross curricular

responsibilities and progression frameworks. However, these learning experiences do not support students well enough to gain a thorough understanding of how the component parts of the Curriculum for Wales interrelate. Modules encourage student teachers to make meaningful connections between educational theory and practice. However, too often, there is an overemphasis on theoretical aspects, in particular during the first university-based phase of the PGCE course, which limits opportunities for student teachers to develop the practical skills and reflective thinking needed to plan effective lessons. As a result, students are not supported well enough to make effective links between educational theory and classroom practice.

The curriculum provides useful opportunities for students to engage with a range of teaching and learning strategies, which are informed by current research and literature. However, taught sessions are not always planned coherently or logically enough, particularly on the PGCE programme. Individual sessions often cover too wide a range of content, limiting purposeful opportunities for student teachers to consolidate their learning or explore pedagogical approaches in sufficient detail. For example, the content of a few taught sessions spans teaching approaches for multiple year groups or subject areas without sufficient time to discuss and reflect upon ideas. This makes it difficult for students to grasp progression and phase-specific pedagogy securely.

A strength of the programme is the provision to support student teachers' Welsh language development. Students are encouraged and supported purposefully to improve their skills from their individual starting points, and most develop increasing confidence and ability to use Welsh to support their teaching.

The programmes provide opportunities for students to consider literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. However, this is not explicit or designed clearly enough for students to gain the skills and understanding required to support the progressive development of pupils' skills. Both programmes offer student teachers opportunities to explore wider educational themes that constitute the cross-cutting themes of the Curriculum for Wales, including diversity, equity and children's rights. These are often delivered through enrichment activities or guest speakers, which student teachers value. However, these inputs are not always clearly integrated into the overall structure of the programme, and the lack of planned progression limits their influence on student teachers' longer-term development.

Inquiry and research are a key part of the provision of both programmes. At times, the timing of assignments, particularly those linked with research or inquiry, is not co-ordinated well enough within the school-based components of the course. Student teachers appreciate synergy days that support them to make links between theory and practice, for example by exploring effective classroom strategies to support pupils with

additional learning needs (ALN) in specialist settings. However, the timing of these activities in the programme is often disconnected and, in a few cases, students are uncertain about how these sessions link to their broader learning journey.

Nearly all tutors, senior mentors and mentors have strong working relationships with their student teachers based on mutual respect. 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 university tutors engage student teachers in lively, stimulating environments and, generally, students feel confident to share their ideas and experiences with others. The majority of tutors model good teaching effectively. For example, they make effective use of questioning and provide valuable opportunities for student teachers to discuss and share ideas in pairs and small groups. In the few instances where practice is most effective, tutors promote critical thinking well. Many tutors have good subject knowledge and they use a range of suitable teaching styles to develop student teachers' knowledge and understanding. However, in a minority of sessions, there are some gaps in tutors' subject knowledge and this results in student teachers' misconceptions not being addressed. This impacts negatively on the progress student teachers make.

Many tutors have high expectations of student teachers and, in the few best cases, tutors demonstrate high-quality professional practice and model great enthusiasm and creativity in their teaching. In the few best instances, tutors demonstrate a secure understanding of the student development and how to support students at different stages of their training. However, tutors do not always have a sound understanding of the pedagogies of ITE and student teachers are not provided with enough opportunities to share their findings collaboratively. Many tutors encourage student teachers to make suitable links between theory and practice, drawing on their experiences during school placements. However, in a minority of sessions, there are few opportunities for student teachers to link theory to practice in a meaningful way. Reading and research materials from suggested lists are often not current enough to support students to make links with current practice. Many tutors provide effective and timely oral feedback during sessions and, in the few best instances, there are rich opportunities for student teachers to challenge their own and others' thinking.

The partnership has suitable systems in place to ensure that student teachers completing the BA and PGCE programmes transition smoothly from one placement to the next. In addition to the support offered by school mentors during placements, university tutors are in regular contact with the student teachers. The tutors provide practical advice on any challenges the student teachers may be facing.

Generally, mentors engage with their roles enthusiastically and encourage student teachers to take part in wider aspects of school life, including parents' evening and assisting with extra-curricular activities. Overall, senior mentors and mentors provide regular and appropriate oral feedback to their students following lesson observations and during weekly catch-up meetings. Around half of mentors engage students in effective professional dialogue that supports them to critically reflect and identify their strengths and areas for improvement accurately. In the best instances, these mentors arrange bespoke opportunities for student teachers to observe other teachers within the school and visit other local schools to see good practice in specific areas. However, the quality of the mentoring is too variable and, in around half of cases, too much time is spent during feedback sessions discussing the progress the student teacher has made against the teaching standards' assessment framework. The necessity to write against the standards dominates some mentoring conversations and this means that some important areas for improvement are sometimes missed or unclear and verbal feedback does not support the student teachers' critical reflections well enough. In these instances, where mentoring feedback is not as effective, there is an insufficient focus on enabling student teachers to improve the quality of their planning. For example, mentors do not provide enough support to enable students to plan purposeful learning activities, develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills or assess pupil progress during lessons.

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 around half of cases, feedback is overly generous and targets set are not specific enough to enable students to develop key areas of their teaching. This means that these student teachers do not make enough progress in important aspects of their practice.

Care, support and guidance:

Leaders, tutors and mentors across the partnership work closely to instil in student teachers the core values necessary for the teaching profession, particularly respect, integrity, collaboration and commitment. Student teachers are well-supported to become effective practitioners committed to their ongoing professional development and with a strong drive to be the best teacher they can be. University tutors and school-based staff provide strong personal support and care for student teachers and have a sound understanding of their personal and professional needs. Strong professional relationships and personalised support are notable features of the partnership.

Student teachers benefit from valuable opportunities to collaborate with mentors and peers on activities such as classroom-based inquiry, which contribute well to their professional growth and confidence. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their

own progress through the effective use of regular reflections in their Professional Learning Passports and during discussions with mentors and tutors.

The programmes provide useful opportunities for students to develop their research skills incrementally. Students are introduced to appropriate research activities and assignments that are directly related to their school-based practice and help them deepen their understanding of specific aspects of education. For example, undergraduate student teachers are introduced to a small-scale research project through critical engagement with a published article on the concept of Cynefin. School based Synergy Days and opportunities to use the simulated classroom also help students consider the relationship between research and their own practice appropriately. Although these activities are helping the partnership to strengthen their vision to develop research-informed practitioners, programmes do not support students well enough to develop deeper critical thinking and robust evaluation of research. University tutors and mentors do not provide enough examples of their own research and how this has influenced practice or has had an impact on pupil learning.

Students have a range of worthwhile opportunities that help them gain an understanding of the context of communities across the partnership and more widely. Through the work in schools and university students are made aware of the impact of poverty on the progress of pupils. They have valuable opportunities during their school placements to consider how schools are addressing this priority, for instance by focusing on the work of the family engagement officer or by engaging in discussions with school-based staff about how they can tailor learning and teaching approaches to respond to specific challenges brought about by the context of the school. The partnership works well in collaboration with outside agencies to ensure that students understand diversity, anti-racist practice and the Rights of the Child.

Student teachers have suitable opportunities to contribute to partnership decision making processes. Student representatives attend partnership leadership groups and influence the development of aspects of the provision. In school, students have opportunities to participate in a wide range of whole-school activities and to develop original and independent initiatives, either for the benefit of pupils or to contribute to professional learning for other staff in the school. However, generally, the partnership does not systematically provide opportunities for all students to build on their leadership skills or facilitate structured opportunities for students to be leaders of learning, for instance in their peer groups.

University tutors and mentors work diligently to ensure that student teachers have useful support and guidance to complete their Professional Learning Passports (PLP). This enables students to use them well to help them monitor their own progress and prepare

for induction. Students receive appropriate opportunities to access support to address shortcomings they have with their literacy, numeracy or digital skills through access to a range of online resources, although the impact of this support is variable.

Student teachers who are not making sufficient progress academically or during school placements are identified swiftly, set appropriate targets for improvement and monitored by staff in school and university tutors. Students receive timely guidance on applying for teaching posts and structured sessions on induction and the next steps in their career.

The partnership works with wider university services to provide support for student well-being. As such, students have helpful opportunities to engage in activities that support their health and well-being. For example, students can access courses to support mental health awareness as well as advice on how to deal with stress. Tutors and mentors are very sensitive to the well-being needs of student teachers, particularly when they are faced with challenges during school placements. For example, the partnership has a supportive and flexible approach to supporting students with attendance at school if their placement has been interrupted by illness or personal challenges. The programme team's understanding and sensitivity in providing support is a strength of both programmes.

The partnership ensures that student teachers with ALN or identified disabilities receive appropriate support throughout all aspects of the programmes. This includes addressing both university and placement related accommodations to meet needs effectively and to provide holistic support for individual students.

Generally, mentors receive useful information from the university about student teachers prior to them starting their placements. Students complete one-page profiles and have meetings with mentors before they work together in school. These opportunities, facilitated by the university, help establish a culture of partnership and collaboration between mentor and student, which is a strength of the partnership. However, mentors are not always sufficiently well informed about the progress individual students make in relation to their previous placements.

The partnership's arrangements for safeguarding give no cause for concern. Student teachers are made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, including training on protecting pupils from radicalisation through university sessions during induction. In school, lead mentors ensure that students are fully briefed on individual school safeguarding arrangements at the start of each placement. The university has recently strengthened its approach to helping students understand how to keep themselves safe and the process for reporting any concerns about their own safety.

Leadership and management:

The University of South Wales Initial Teacher Education Partnership's vision aligns well with the University's civic mission to develop research-informed, reflective, and collaborative learners. Since the accreditation of the BA Primary and PGCE programmes in 2020 and 2022 respectively, ITE leaders have developed purposeful and collaborative relationships with partner schools. Much of this work has been based on long-standing partnerships with schools developed prior to the accreditation of the new programmes. As a result, there is a deep and shared commitment across the Partnership to prepare student teachers effectively for the profession. The vision is suitably underpinned by both a conceptual model based on Communities of Learning, which beneficially promotes collaboration and co-construction of knowledge, and a strong commitment to 'signature pedagogies' for initial teacher education. However, the Partnership's vision and strategic priorities are not consistently understood by either university or school-based staff. This lack of shared understanding limits the quality and impact of the Partnership's work across the different elements of both programmes.

Recently there has been considerable and rapid change in the Partnership's university based senior ITE leadership team, with a very limited opportunity for handover for the acting post-holders to support them in their new roles. These new ITE leaders have diligently sought to make the transition period as smooth as possible for their colleagues and partners. Despite this, progress against a few strategic priorities has stalled. Moreover, important leadership practices and routines are underdeveloped. For example, the use of whole-cohort data or the direct observations of teaching and mentoring are currently insufficient to inform strategic planning.

Senior leaders across the Partnership contribute suitably to reviewing the strategic direction through co-chairing the Executive Board and Leadership Group. Governance structures also include appropriate groups that meet regularly to consider key areas such as learning and teaching, research and well-being. Although these governance groups support programme delivery, they do not offer enough critical scrutiny to effectively drive improvement. For example, gaps in provision to develop student teachers' understanding of safeguarding procedures have only recently been identified and addressed. Although these groups provide suitable feedback on operational matters, they do not focus sufficiently on the Partnership's strategic goals.

The Partnership has suitable communication processes to share important information, and partner schools generally find these clear and supportive. Recently, communication has been further strengthened, for example through the launch of a newsletter detailing updates. Placement arrangements are managed and communicated carefully, considering the needs of both schools and student teachers. The recently appointed Director of ITE

and the wider ITE leadership team respond promptly to issues raised by schools, which helps to build trust and strengthen relationships.

Senior leaders in the University have allocated appropriate resources to support the Partnership. For example, they have recently recognised the need to provide additional time for leadership responsibilities to be undertaken in key areas such as research, recruitment, and data analysis, although it is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes. The Partnership has invested heavily in the role of Quality Assurance Leads. Despite their involvement in leadership groups, and their routine visits to observe student teachers, Quality Assurance Leads do not contribute well enough to shaping the strategic direction. As a result, they have not had sufficient impact on improving important aspects such as mentoring.

The Partnership has a carefully structured approach to a few aspects of self-evaluation, such as gathering the views of student teachers and school partners. This has led to helpful feedback to inform operational changes, for example adjusting placement durations. However, currently, leaders do not make sufficient use of a wider evidence base to evaluate the impact of their work. For example, they do not consider whole-cohort data well enough to track student teachers' performance or carry out direct observations of teaching and mentoring to inform strategic planning. Quality Assurance Leads do not formally evaluate or report on the quality of mentoring and have only recently begun to share their views of the support offered by partner schools. In addition, there is limited evaluation of the impact of the Quality Assurance Lead role, which represents a significant Partnership investment. As a result of these shortcomings, important areas for development in provision and leadership and the associated impact on student teachers' learning are not identified or addressed with sufficient urgency.

Strategic planning reflects national priorities appropriately, including the development of Welsh language skills and research capacity. The focus on these national priorities has contributed positively to student outcomes. As a result of the collaborative work with stakeholders, beneficial opportunities have been identified to enrich a few aspects of provision, for example in relation to Welsh language skills. This has contributed positively to student teachers' development in this area. The Partnership demonstrates a strong commitment to equity and diversity, as illustrated by engagement with the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. Strategic plans suitably identify a few relevant local priorities, such as strengthening the role of Quality Assurance Leads in mentoring, but the link between self-evaluation and the local priorities is not strong enough. In addition, progress in addressing these priorities has been limited during a period of leadership transition and university restructuring. Leaders have not evaluated progress against their priorities robustly. Over time, senior university leaders have not provided sufficient oversight to ensure timely Partnership responses to external

recommendations, particularly in relation to mentoring, self-evaluation and quality assurance.

ITE tutors engage beneficially in collaborative research aligned with national priorities, and the university provides appropriate support for staff to undertake research through individual research plans. In a few cases, staff draw effectively on their own research to inform their teaching, for example in the use of creative research methodologies or how to support pupils' mental health. Staff are also supported appropriately to undertake professional learning linked to individual and programme needs, and this helps develop their understanding of the pedagogies of ITE. The annual Partnership conference provides a valuable opportunity for university and school-based educators to share research and professional interests. ITE leaders identify appropriately the need to build on this so that partner schools and others benefit more regularly from research and professional enquiries.

Most mentors attend useful university-based training, where they benefit from clear and detailed procedural guidance to support student teachers' progress during placements. As a result, many mentors make helpful comments on student teachers' Professional Learning Passports. ITE leaders also recognise the need to offer support for mentors at different stages of their development. For example, they show a strong commitment to the model of 'educative mentoring' with an emphasis on promoting reflective dialogue between mentors and student teachers. In a few cases, this professional learning has a positive impact as mentors skilfully support student teachers to reflect critically on their practice, for example through careful questioning. However, the approach is at an early stage of development and is not yet well understood or applied consistently across 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)

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