

INFORMATION UPDATE

Our Ref: M24-51

5 June 2024

Ofsted's role in quality assuring Initial Teacher Education in England

Purpose

1. Following your visit to the United Kingdom and meeting with Ofsted's Chief Inspector, you requested further information on Ofsted's role in quality assuring Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England. This note provides you with this information.

Overview

2. In response to concerns around teacher retention and recruitment, and recognition of the importance that strong ITE plays in raising educational outcomes and closing achievement gaps for all children and young people, the UK government launched an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review in 2021. The Review acknowledged a number of potential challenges including consistency between ITE providers, provision of high-quality placements and high-quality mentoring.
3. Following this Review, the Department for Education (DfE) took action to strengthen the quality of ITE and quality assurance process, of which Ofsted play a significant role. From September 2024 all organisations delivering ITE leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) must be accredited by the DfE against new criteria, set by the DfE, including new Quality Requirements. Ofsted then inspect ITE delivery for all accredited providers every 3 years and their judgements inform decisions regarding accreditation withdrawal if the provider is judged to be of low quality following a reinspection.

Ofsted's role in the quality assurance of ITE

Legislation – Powers to inspect ITE providers

4. Section 18B of the Education Act 1994 provides a power for His Majesty's Chief Inspector (Ofsted) to inspect initial training of teachers for schools and, when requested by the Secretary of State, a duty to do so.¹
5. This power enables Ofsted to offer an independent external evaluation of an ITE provider's effectiveness and quality, and where appropriate, offer recommendations. The judgements inform whether a provider's accreditation is withdrawn. Evaluation is based on a national framework which takes full account of policies and relevant legislation in areas such as safeguarding, equality and diversity.

¹ The Education and Inspections Act 2006 & accompanying Regulations set out the duties in relation to further education & skills and early years sectors.

Purpose

6. Ofsted's inspections of ITE perform 4 essential functions:
 - a) Inspection reports are published to provide trainees and prospective trainees with an expert, independent assessment of how well an ITE provider is performing and the quality of ITE and training offered, supporting well-informed choices.
 - b) They ensure that early career teachers and former early years and further education & skills trainees are well prepared to meet the needs of pupils, children and learners in their care.
 - c) They provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament about ITE providers and the extent to which an acceptable standard of ITE is being provided. This provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money, and assists accountability, as well as indicating where improvements are needed.
 - d) They encourage the improvement of individual ITE providers and the education system as a whole.

Delivery

7. Ofsted inspects three different models of ITE delivery:
 - a) Direct delivery (stand-alone programmes awarded by and taught exclusively at a provider).
 - b) Franchised delivery (programmes awarded by one provider but also taught at other providers as part of a formal partnership agreement. In this case, it is the partnership that is inspected not the individual providers within it).
 - c) Validated delivery (programmes delivered by a provider that a degree-awarding body validates on the provider's behalf. They do not inspect the validating body, only the provider).
8. The focus of inspections is on how providers make sure trainees receive the highest possible quality of ITE and training, not on inspecting specific individuals.

Timing

9. In the current cycle, Ofsted inspects ITE delivery for all accredited ITE providers every 3 years. New providers will have their first inspection in their second year of delivering ITE to trainees. Providers are given 3 working days notice.
10. An ITE provider that has been judged at an inspection as requires improvement or inadequate will have a re-inspection (of the phase(s) judged as such) within 12 months. The re-inspection will focus on ensuring that the provider is consistently good or better, and that it adheres to the ITE compliance criteria for early years and for primary and secondary phases. It will also check whether the provider ensures that trainees within a primary or secondary phase receive their minimum entitlement.

Judgements

11. Inspectors make judgements on the overall effectiveness of:
 - a) The quality of education and training.
 - b) Leadership and management.
12. Inspectors use a four-point scale (inadequate; requires improvement; good; outstanding) to grade the key judgements and the overall effectiveness judgement (based on agreed criteria). Consecutive judgements of less than good can lead to the DfE withdrawing accreditation from a provider.

Additional information regarding teacher training in England

13. Ofsted and Appropriate Bodies also play a role in ensuring all trainees and early career teachers receive their entitlement to training and professional development. This will include, from September 2025, the new Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF) - attached as Annex A.
14. The ITTECF sets out the entitlement of every trainee and early career teacher (ECT) to the core body of knowledge, skills and behaviours, and to the mentoring and support from expert colleagues they should receive throughout the three or more years at the start of their career. The ITTECF is based on the best available evidence from the UK and around the world, assured by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

Impact

15. By August 2024, all registered ITE providers will have been inspected under the ITE Framework, which intentionally raises the bar for providers. As of April 2023, the proportion of providers who received a judgement of good or outstanding fell from 100% in August 2020, to 94%.

Next steps

16. Following on from your discussion with Officials yesterday (4 June), ERO is working with the Ministry of Education to provide joint advice regarding options to strengthen the quality of ITE in New Zealand, including drawing on the UK's approach.
17. A copy of this note has also been sent to the Ministry of Education.

Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive