

Five Counties SCITT

Address: CLF Institute, Cabot Learning Federation, Russell Town Avenue, Redfield, Bristol, Bristol, BS5 9JH

Unique reference number (URN): 70362

Inspection report: 9 March 2026

1. Primary

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ● ● ●
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met**

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Trainees develop strong knowledge and skills incrementally, which prepares them thoroughly for teaching in the primary phase. Throughout the programme, they apply core components of effective teaching, including behaviour management and adaptive teaching strategies, with increasing confidence.

Leaders and professional tutors track trainees' progress very closely. Regular review points, precise mentor feedback and course targets help trainees to identify their strengths and priorities for improvement. Support plans and bespoke actions have a positive impact, particularly for trainees facing barriers. Trainees value thinking critically through micro teaching and structured reflection tasks.

Trainees are very well prepared for employment. They receive clear guidance on career options and benefit from an employability day that mirrors a typical interview process. Mock interviews and structured feedback help trainees present themselves confidently. Completion rates in the primary course remain consistently high. Most trainees secure teaching jobs by the end of the course, with many continuing their careers with the partnership.

Curriculum, teaching and training

Strong standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious and expertly sequenced curriculum for the primary phase. It is informed by high-quality, up-to-date research and provides trainees with a secure foundation in subject- and phase-specific knowledge. A focus on behaviour management strategies at the start of the programme allows trainees to apply and refine routines across placements, progressively building their expertise.

Seamless integration of centre-based training and classroom practice ensures that trainees can connect theory to practice very well. The planning of the intensive training and practice sequence offers repeated, structured opportunities for trainees to rehearse key teaching components before applying them in classroom contexts. Trainees benefit from precise mentor feedback and become adept at modelling and refining their questioning skills.

The curriculum is grounded in relevant research. Expert subject tutors, including those from specialist English and mathematics hubs, deliver training that closely mirrors the curriculum's design and ambition. Inclusion is integral to the initial teacher education curriculum. Trainees gain an insight into how the youngest children learn and how to adapt teaching for pupils facing barriers to learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Scenario-based tasks help trainees apply their learning confidently during placements.

Specialist pathways add depth and breadth to the primary programme. For example, the SEND pathway enhances trainees' understanding of sensory processing, communication and managing adults in the classroom. Course targets for these trainees are precise and lead to notable improvements in practice.

Mentoring is well established and highly effective within the programme. It is supported by consistently strong communication between leaders and placement schools. Professional tutors and mentors have a detailed understanding of what is taught and when. They receive fortnightly training plans, enabling them to support trainees to apply new learning in classrooms in a responsive and timely way. Trainees speak positively about the extensive expertise mentors bring to their development.

Assessment is ongoing and developmental. Regular review points, clear targets and precise feedback from mentors and professional tutors help trainees understand their progress and identify priorities for improvement.

Safeguarding is embedded throughout the programme. Trainees receive comprehensive training on identifying risks, responding to concerns and understanding statutory guidance.

Mentors reinforce this knowledge during school placements, ensuring that trainees are confident in keeping children safe.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Trainees thrive at this highly inclusive provider. Leaders make trainees feel welcome and valued from the outset, regardless of their background or prior experience. Consequently, trainees feel confident being themselves and sharing any additional needs they may have.

Leaders and professional tutors form strong relationships with trainees. They take time to understand trainees' individual needs and use this insight to tailor the support they offer. This approach helps to remove potential barriers to learning and placements. For example, leaders consider the impact of travelling when arranging school placements and provide considered support for those with medical needs.

Leaders make thoughtful adjustments to centre-based training so that trainees with identified needs can take part in all aspects of the programme. For example, they provide early access to training materials or additional writing tutorials to help reduce academic barriers. Trainees consistently report that this support is instrumental in their success.

Consideration for trainees' wellbeing is at the forefront of the provider's decision-making. Leaders work closely with partner schools and professional tutors to ensure that trainees receive clear, consistent information about the internal and external wellbeing support available. On rare occasions where trainees struggle, leaders respond promptly, for example by rearranging placements.

Leadership

Strong standard ●

Leaders articulate a clear and ambitious vision for high-quality initial teacher education. The programme is rooted in values of equity and inclusion. It celebrates the diverse backgrounds and perspectives that trainees bring to the community. Leaders have an astute understanding of the programme's strengths and areas for development. Improvement priorities, such as enhancing curriculum pathways and strengthening the intensive teaching and practice components, are well informed and responsive to the local context. As a result, trainees thrive in a supportive, close-knit community, focused on preparing them for a successful career in teaching.

Collaboration is a particular strength of the partnership. Leaders work closely with partner schools and subject tutors to enrich the curriculum and secure high-quality placements. Leaders actively seek feedback from stakeholders to ensure that everyone feels respected and able to focus on supporting trainees.

Leaders have embedded robust quality assurance systems. Professional tutors and mentors are clear about their roles and responsibilities and feel valued for their contribution. They receive appropriate training, tailored to their experience, which is accessible and supports effective time management. In partnership, mentors and professional tutors identify trainees' needs early and adapt support to where issues arise. Leaders facilitate regular reviews with professional tutors, continually refining the programme. This structured approach secures

consistency across the partnership and keeps trainees' best interests central to the programme.

Those responsible for oversight exercise their roles with rigour and clarity. The partnership board provides leaders with sharp, well-informed challenge that strengthens strategic decision-making. Leaders ensure that the provision complies with all Department for Education statutory requirements, including safer recruitment practices.

Professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders set clear, consistently high expectations for trainees' professional conduct, attendance and engagement. These expectations are established from the outset and reinforced during school placements. This guidance helps trainees build the personal and professional qualities needed for a successful teaching career. Timely additional support ensures that attendance or conduct issues are addressed without delay.

Trainees describe a culture in which leaders actively listen, respond promptly and prioritise their welfare. For example, leaders' changes to assessment have eased workload pressures and enabled trainees to manage their time more effectively. Trainees trust that any bullying or discrimination would be taken seriously and dealt with effectively by leaders.

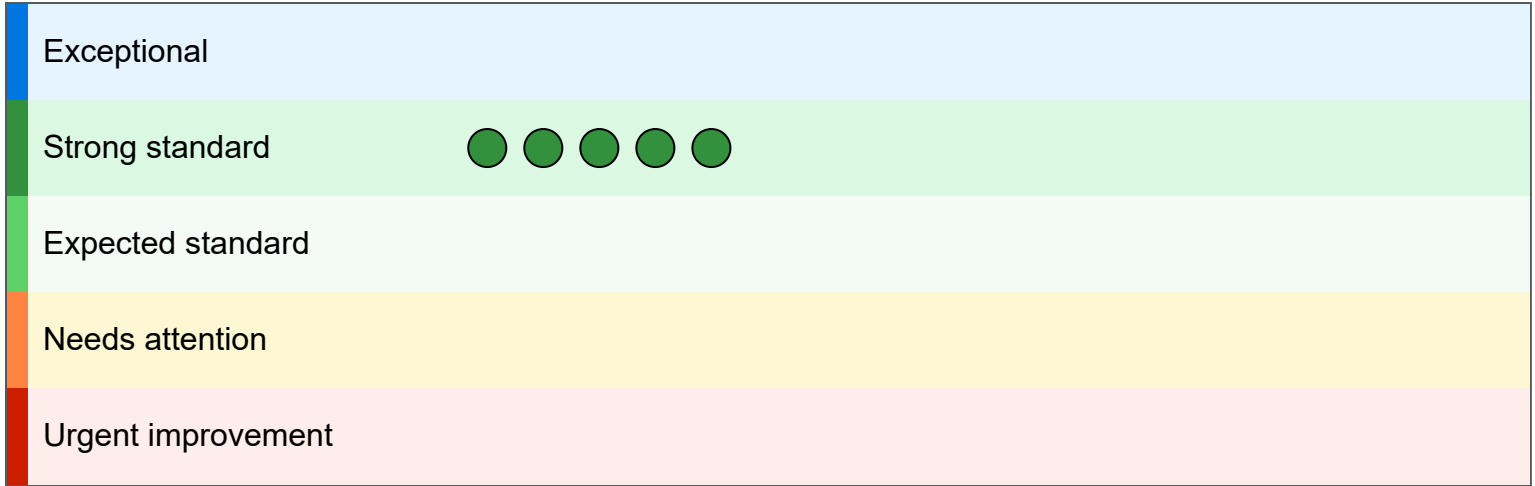
Leaders demonstrate a genuine commitment to understanding trainees' personal circumstances. For example, they proactively offer regular wellbeing checks. Trainees appreciate how leaders make thoughtful adaptations for those dealing with health issues, mental health challenges or family commitments. Personalised pastoral support, including assistance with housing or finances, helps trainees stay focused and continue with their studies.

School partners report that trainees develop the resilience and professional behaviours needed for the next stage of their careers. They value the programme's emphasis on professional standards and wellbeing. This helps trainees embed behaviours they can maintain beyond initial teacher training.

Next steps

Leaders should continue to drive excellence within the specialist pathways, to sustain them over time and to ensure an even greater impact on trainees' learning.

2. Secondary



✔ **Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met**

Strong standard ●

Achievement Strong standard ●

Trainees are extremely well prepared for a future career in teaching. Leaders ensure that trainees develop an astute understanding of the realities of teaching. Many go on to successful future employment as teachers, often in lead partner schools. Where others may not complete the course, this is for good reason and is well understood by leaders. Extensive support enables trainees to extend, return or seek a different form of employment as appropriate.

Trainees develop highly relevant knowledge and skills across the different subject areas, within their pedagogical understanding and responsibilities as a teacher. Trainees are highly reflective. Leaders and other teacher educators support them to enhance their identified strengths and improve their areas for development, giving them the platform to be the best that they can be. Trainees continually seek and act on feedback from others. They develop high levels of autonomy by the end of the course.

Curriculum, teaching and training Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed an ambitious and very well-constructed curriculum. Trainees develop a strong depth of pedagogical knowledge that is rooted in evidence-based research. There is flawless integration between the centre-based taught curriculum and school-based practice. As a result, trainees develop the skills and knowledge required for their next steps as teaching professionals.

The subject-specific curriculum is rich and evidence based. Trainees build effectively on their prior subject knowledge and develop the skills to apply this in different contexts. As the number of subject pathways has grown, leaders identify that further embedding of the

subject specificity of courses, and the integration with the pedagogical content, is a continued priority.

Leaders draw on educational research to deepen trainees' knowledge about the pedagogical choices they make in their classroom practice. As they move through the course, trainees become increasingly reflective about these choices and are enabled to refine their teaching with precision and expertise.

Inclusion permeates the curriculum. Trainees learn in depth about educational research that underpins adaptive teaching strategies. As a result, trainees are increasingly well prepared to teach all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Through carefully layered opportunities, trainees develop an informed understanding of the barriers to learning that some pupils may face. The curriculum supports trainees to consider a breadth of strategies to help pupils, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, to learn with confidence and success. The careful balance between the taught curriculum and school-based practice provides trainees with powerful opportunities to apply their knowledge. This, therefore, prepares trainees very well for the world of education.

Through the curriculum, trainees develop a confident understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. Safeguarding is woven through the centre-based curriculum, right from the induction week. This is then strengthened through ongoing high expectations around safeguarding training and practice.

Mentoring is a strength of the provision. Mentors are selected with care for their expertise and experience. As a result, trainees receive high-quality support. This enables trainees to develop both confidence and knowledge in teaching their subjects. Mentors set precise targets which help trainees to develop well and become deeply reflective about their practice. Trainees are assessed continually throughout the course. Assignments further complement the development of trainees' knowledge. Trainees develop highly effective pedagogical understanding through the intensive teaching and practice element of the course. Leaders use ongoing assessment to refine support further for trainees.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established an initial teacher education programme that is fully inclusive of trainees from a range of backgrounds. They have created a culture across the curriculum that ensures trainees feel valued and supported. Trainees are confident to voice their views and any worries or concerns they may have. They know that they will be listened to and well supported. Leaders ensure that trainees are signposted to a range of internal and external support. Trainees make good use of this advice and guidance.

From the recruitment stage, leaders are highly inclusive. This enables a wide range of applicants to access the course and be successful. Through carefully planned reviews, leaders ensure that tailored support is provided to trainees with additional needs throughout the programme. For example, trainees who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive bespoke support to enable them to flourish. Trainees with English as an additional language (EAL) are equally well supported. Leaders make many other well-considered reasonable adjustments to support trainees who may have carer

responsibilities or a protected characteristic. Leaders select mentors with precision to ensure that trainees receive the right amount of support at the right time.

Leadership

Strong standard 

Leaders' overarching values to champion inclusivity and disadvantage are woven through the provision. They have established effective collaboration with lead partners and continue to strengthen relationships with a greater number of schools as the provision grows. Leaders have an astute understanding of the strengths and priorities for continued improvement in the secondary phase. There are many examples of rapid and sustained change when a development area is focused on. For example, the strengthening of mentor training and accountability, and the creation of two cohorts to enhance trainees' experience.

Leaders provide a rich and well-considered professional development programme for staff. They ensure that there are opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice, which is underpinned by the best of what is known about effective teacher development. Leaders utilise the expertise of professionals within partner schools and beyond to enrich the curriculum content and delivery for trainees.

Leaders have clear and high expectations for all staff across the course programme and partnerships. There are many examples of leaders supporting staff to enhance their practice and making curriculum or delivery adaptations in response to stakeholder feedback or review processes. Leaders take decisions in the best interests of trainees. They are emphatic in the care they provide to enable trainees to be successful and thrive. Leaders have created a safe environment and a strong sense of belonging for trainees and staff.

The provider meets statutory requirements and areas of compliance. Safer recruitment is effective and the provider is relentlessly inclusive when considering trainee applications.

Professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders have high expectations of trainees, preparing them well to become teaching professionals. The course begins and ends with a focus on professional behaviours, ensuring that trainees are aware of what is required of them as they develop. Where any trainee falls short of expectations, this is identified quickly and appropriate advice and guidance are provided. Trainees show their understanding of the responsibilities of teaching in their positive attendance and ongoing commitment to their learning.

Trainees have access to extensive support and guidance, both in centre-based and school-based elements. Trainees feel able to share any barriers they are experiencing, confident that they will get the bespoke help that they need. This supports trainees from diverse backgrounds, especially in groups that are often under-represented in the teaching profession, to complete the course. The diversity of trainees is well aligned to the diversity in local schools.

Trainees have not experienced incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination. They know who they would report any concerns to and are clear that any such behaviours would not be tolerated. The ways in which diversity is promoted reduce the likelihood of discrimination occurring.

Leaders support trainees to understand and manage the pressures around workload. Across the year, they become resilient and reflective and learn to manage their workload effectively.

Next steps

Leaders should further refine and embed some areas of the secondary subject-specific curriculum in order to consistently maintain the highest possible standard across a growing number of courses.

What it's like to be a trainee at this provider

Five Counties SCITT (school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT)) is part of a wider teaching school alliance. It uses a range of expertise and resources, such as the mathematics hub, to inform the initial teacher education (ITE) training courses. Trainees benefit from this high-quality input to their training. The SCITT sets out a clear progressive career pathway for trainees joining the profession. Most trainees go on to become part of an alumni of teachers and future school leaders, which previous trainees, leaders and staff are hugely proud of. Throughout the course, the SCITT communicates and models high expectations. Trainees quickly develop the professional qualities they need to prepare as teachers.

Embedded throughout the curriculum is leaders' vision to prepare trainees to champion the pupils they teach, and to tackle disadvantage. This inspires many trainees to choose Five Counties for their training. With a focus on inclusion, trainees are well prepared to take up posts in a range of schools across the region.

Five Counties leaders are robust and broad in their recruitment of trainees. This appeals to trainees with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds. Leaders work hard to ensure adjustments and support are rapid, responsive and personalised. Trainees are warmly welcomed to the centre and to their placement schools.

Trainees have multiple ways in which they feedback and share their views. This helps leaders to understand and shape the course, such as reducing the workload for assessment points. Pastoral support and resources, such as an employees' assistance programme, help trainees. Alongside a thorough mentoring process, most trainees feel very well supported.

Trainees have a diligent and thorough preparation for understanding safeguarding. This helps them to be clear in their duty towards the pupils they teach. The supporting trust's culture of safeguarding informs the work of the SCITT to prepare trainees effectively as they commence their teaching careers.

About this inspection

The Five Counties SCITT (school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT)) offers postgraduate routes into teaching. All pathways lead to qualified teacher status (QTS), and most trainees go on to complete a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE).

The PGCE is awarded in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University.

Some trainees commence pathways that are offered in partnership with three training partners.

In the primary phase, trainees specialise in the 3 to 7 or 5 to 11 age range. Trainees can also choose to follow a specialist primary pathway in either mathematics, music or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Trainees following the secondary route specialise in the 11 to 16 age range. There are currently twelve subject areas to choose from.

Previously, the provider was inspected under the name of Cabot Learning Federation SCITT. It was last inspected in March 2024. The SCITT formally changed its operating name to Five Counties in 2024.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the director of initial teacher training (ITT), the director of the institute and the programme leads for primary and secondary. They also spoke with the leaders of the three lead training partners and members of the strategic management board.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with those responsible for compliance. Inspectors also met and spoke with many staff, trainees, professional tutors, lead mentors and mentors. They also met with early career teachers who had completed their initial training with the provider.

Overall lead inspector:
Rachel Hesketh, His Majesty's Inspector

Primary phase lead inspector:
Dale Burr, His Majesty's Inspector

Secondary phase lead inspector:
Kelly Olive, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Julie Carrington, His Majesty's Inspector
Susan Aykin, His Majesty's Inspector
Lydia Pride, His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Favager-Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 9 March 2026

Number of partners and trainees

Education phase	Number of training partners / partner colleges	Number of trainees
Early years	N/A	
Primary	3	48
Secondary	2	78
Further education and skills	N/A	

Our grades explained

- Exceptional**  Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.
- Strong standard** 

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of training. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of training.

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