

# University Centre Farnborough

**Address:** Hart Campus, Hart Council Offices, Harlington Way, GU51 4AE

**Unique reference number (URN):** 2783747

## Inspection report: 23 March 2026

### 1. Primary

|                    |                                                                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                                    |
| Strong standard    |                                                                                    |
| Expected standard  |  |
| Needs attention    |                                                                                    |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                                    |

 **Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met**

**Expected standard** 

#### Achievement

**Expected standard** 

Trainees know how to establish a culture of positive behaviour expectations and how to apply the principles of effective teaching in the primary phase. They develop a secure understanding of how to teach different national curriculum subjects and apply what they know with increasing skill and confidence. This includes making teaching choices which reflect pupils' needs and prior learning.

The initial teacher education programme has high retention and completion rates. Most trainees, including those with barriers to learning or wellbeing, complete the programme and secure employment by the end of the programme. This is because leaders ensure that each trainee has the tailored support they need. Leaders are quick to identify anyone needing extra help and take effective steps to keep them on track. As a result, trainees are prepared securely for their next steps in the teaching profession.

The feedback that trainees receive is not always focused sharply enough on enabling them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of all the elements in the taught curriculum. As a result, trainees are not supported to fully reflect on and build a comprehensive understanding of how they can further develop their teaching.

## Curriculum, teaching and training

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a coherently sequenced curriculum which meets the requirements of the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework. Leaders have used current educational research well to underpin the initial teacher education curriculum. Trainees learn how the curriculum that pupils follow progresses from the early years foundation stage through to key stage 3. Trainees are also taught to understand the risks that pupils may face and the importance of teachers' roles in safeguarding pupils.

The curriculum enables trainees to learn about the specific subject knowledge needed to teach the national curriculum across the primary phase. Key elements run throughout the curriculum, such as teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the science of learning, adaptive teaching, subject knowledge and reflective practice. The curriculum is organised so that trainees revisit these key areas regularly to deepen their understanding. Trainees undertake additional school placements in specialist provision to extend their knowledge of how to teach pupils with SEND.

Leaders identify Intensive Training and Practice themes in collaboration with partnership schools. These themes are designed to consolidate trainees' understanding of key areas of the curriculum. However, while trainees learn about current educational research, opportunities for them to reflect meaningfully on its relevance to the school-based practice are not as well developed.

Within the programme, clear emphasis is given to teaching trainees about the key areas of the national curriculum that pupils should master during the early years foundation stage and key stage 1. Leaders prioritise developing trainees' understanding of how to teach phonics and early reading. Trainees are also supported to build a secure understanding of how to develop pupils' language as a precursor to reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders deliberately provide trainees with opportunities to put their knowledge of pupils' early learning into practice. For example, every trainee in the primary phase carries out their first school placement in key stage 1.

The curriculum is suitably ambitious and well planned overall. However, some elements of the programme have not been sufficiently refined to provide absolute clarity about what trainees should be able to do and when. Some targets that trainees are set on school-based practice are not as closely aligned with what they are learning in the taught curriculum as others. As a result, there are occasions when trainees do not receive the feedback they need to identify actions that would help to improve their teaching.

## Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed the programme that builds a community where trainees feel that they are welcome, their voice matters, and they have the confidence to ask for help if they need it.

The provider's recruitment and admission processes are designed to ensure that trainees feel safe to disclose any concerns or additional needs, right from their first interview. This includes any special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders put in place appropriate adaptations so that all trainees can fully access the programme and overcome any barriers. For example, they signpost trainees to external bursaries for transport, study materials and expert services such as counselling.

Trainees benefit from opportunities to learn about how they can look after their wellbeing and mental health. Important themes are threaded throughout the curriculum and revisited as trainees develop their experience in various school placement settings.

Leaders work with schools to help them understand what support trainees need while on school placements. Generally, trainees' experiences are positive. However, the approach to aligning centre-based training and support with what trainees experience on school placements is not fully embedded. This prevents trainees from feeling consistently well supported with their individual needs throughout all elements of the programme.

## Leadership

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for a research-informed curriculum that prioritises both high-quality training and the best interests of trainees. Leaders work effectively with partner schools to develop teachers with the subject and phase expertise most in demand in the local area. Leaders listen to and act effectively on feedback from partner schools and trainees. They make sure that their views are reflected in ongoing refinements to the programme.

Throughout their work, leaders maintain a clear emphasis on inclusion, evidence-informed professional learning and productive relationships with schools. Leaders promote a respectful and inclusive environment where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated.

Leaders place trainees at the heart of the provision. They use information effectively to help trainees overcome barriers to learning and/or wellbeing, meet their individual needs and enable them to complete the programme successfully.

Those overseeing the provision understand their roles well and provide appropriate challenge and support. They ensure that statutory responsibilities and compliance criteria are met and that leaders' workload and wellbeing are prioritised. Leaders have access to relevant professional development and are committed role models for professional growth. Staff also benefit from opportunities to develop professionally and a culture which seeks to minimise unnecessary demands on their time and workload.

The provider's systems for monitoring and evaluation are established and contribute to leaders' secure understanding of the programme's strengths and areas for development. This analysis generally enables leaders to build on what is working well and prioritise the most important areas for development.

Leaders exemplify the professional behaviours that trainees learn about. Trainees are supported well. For example, trainees are supported to apply for bursaries and external support to help them overcome barriers to wellbeing or learning. Leaders ensure that trainees receive appropriate pastoral support.

Trainees are taught how to contribute to the wider life of the school and how this builds professional relationships. Leaders have high expectations for trainees' professional behaviours, including attendance. Leaders support trainees to overcome barriers to attendance and, when needed, ensure that they catch up with any areas of the curriculum missed due to absence.

Leaders foster a culture in which trainees are consistently treated with respect. They maintain an uncompromising approach to preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Trainees are confident in how to report any concerns, and leaders respond swiftly and appropriately when issues arise. As a result, the provider offers a positive and supportive environment for professional learning.

Trainees feel well supported and increasingly demonstrate the positive habits of professional conduct expected of those entering the teaching profession. This includes learning about and putting into practice appropriate strategies to manage workload demands, both as a trainee and in the future. In addition, leaders promote mental health and wellbeing.

## **Next steps**

Leaders should further refine elements of the curriculum so that there is absolute clarity and alignment of what trainees should learn and when throughout taught elements of the curriculum and school placements.

Leaders should ensure that feedback for trainees is precise enough to help them understand and reflect in depth on their progression towards becoming expert teachers, including their understanding and application of educational research.

Leaders should strengthen their work to fully align support for trainees during centre-based training and school placements, ensuring that this is of consistently high quality so that all trainees experience equity throughout all elements of the programme.

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## 2. Secondary

|                    |                                                                    |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                    |
| Strong standard    |                                                                    |
| Expected standard  | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> |
| Needs attention    |                                                                    |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                    |

### Compliance, including safeguarding: standards met

#### Expected standard

##### Achievement

Expected standard 

Typically, trainees, including those with barriers to learning or wellbeing, develop secure subject knowledge and complete the programme successfully.

Through a well-designed taught curriculum and leaders' tailored support, trainees grow in confidence to develop their subject knowledge and their understanding of behaviour management. Trainees learn the curriculum securely, for example, they know how to plan effective lessons and adapt their teaching to meet different pupils' needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Trainees have opportunities to apply educational research to their practice. For example, they use their knowledge of working and long-term memory when designing sequences of learning.

Trainees reflect regularly on their practice. However, they are not challenged well enough to consider and articulate in depth how the practical application of educational research is shaping their journey from novice to expert practitioners. The feedback that trainees receive does not, at times, pinpoint and prioritise next steps that align closely with the taught curriculum. As a result, trainees' awareness of their strengths and the elements which need further development is not as precise as it could be.

##### Curriculum, teaching and training

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a coherent, evidence-informed and logically sequenced curriculum that meets statutory requirements. The curriculum has been shaped through proactive engagement with local school partners. The design of the curriculum ensures that key concepts are revisited in more depth over time. For example, at the beginning of the programme, centre-based learning places a deliberate focus on making sure that trainees secure essential subject knowledge in readiness for school placements. However, in some

subjects and areas of the curriculum, leaders have not identified precisely how trainees should be supported to build detailed knowledge.

The curriculum is underpinned by principles from cognitive science. These approaches are embedded in formal teaching and modelled regularly by programme leaders. Trainees benefit from purposeful exposure to diverse educational contexts. For example, they learn about the use of phonics and pupils who find reading difficult. Trainees also benefit from teaching experience in key stage 5 and a placement in alternative provision. This reflects leaders' aim to ensure that trainees enter the teaching profession with a well-rounded set of knowledge and skills.

Subject-specialist training is generally well integrated throughout taught elements of the programme and school-based experience. The golden thread of adapting teaching for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities runs throughout the programme. As a result, trainees learn how to meet the needs of pupils with barriers to learning or wellbeing effectively.

The curriculum is organised around 5 clear pillars to emphasise the essential roles that behaviour, assessment, curriculum, pedagogy and professional behaviours all play in effective teaching. This approach broadly supports coherence between the taught curriculum and school-based experience. However, during school-based placements, trainees' targets are not focused sharply enough on the areas that are most important for their development. As a result, trainees are not as clear as they could be about what they are expected to learn.

Leaders have appropriate systems in place to check how well trainees learn. For example, reports of teaching practice, assignments, tutor visits and one-to-one meetings contribute to leaders' overall understanding of trainees' progress through the curriculum. Although mentors provide high levels of support and guidance to trainees, they do not have a consistent enough understanding of the curriculum to identify precisely what elements of practice trainees must prioritise to deepen their understanding and consolidate their learning.

Safeguarding is woven throughout the curriculum. School-based training ensures trainees understand how to keep pupils safe, follow procedures and recognise signs of concern.

Trainees have suitable opportunities to learn about the wider responsibilities of a teacher. For example, they are taught about the value of trips and role of parents and other professionals. Trainees put these principles into practice by taking an active part in parents' evenings, educational outings and extra-curricular clubs.

## **Inclusion**

**Expected standard** 

From the start of the programme, leaders explore and identify any potential barriers to learning that trainees may have. Leaders work effectively with trainees to help them overcome these barriers to learning or wellbeing. For example, they ensure reasonable adjustments are made quickly and that these are tailored to what each trainee needs. Leaders also support trainees to develop strategies to help themselves and to have agency for their own development and progress.



Leaders actively promote their commitment to inclusive practice. For example, leaders from the education sector are invited to encourage and inspire trainees by speaking about how they have overcome their own barriers to learning and wellbeing. Trainees feel confident to ask for help and generally feel well supported.

Although leaders demonstrate commitment to inclusion, there is some variability in the views of trainees about the impact of the support they receive. The systems and processes that leaders implement are not universally well embedded across centre-based training and school placements. This leads to some inconsistencies in the quality and precision of support that a few individual trainees receive.

## **Leadership**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders have a clear vision for developing high-quality teachers who can provide pupils with an excellent education in local schools. Leaders work in tandem with partnership schools to address specific shortages in subject experts in the teaching workforce. Leaders, trainees and partner schools work together in trainees' best interests. Leaders take careful account of feedback from all stakeholders when refining the curriculum and making changes to the programme. Overall, the provider's approach ensures that trainees receive the training and guidance they need to fulfil their ambition of becoming a teacher.

Those overseeing the provision understand well their roles and responsibilities for ensuring that statutory duties and compliance standards are met. They have put in place suitable approaches to hold leaders to account for realising their vision and ensuring the initial teacher education provision meets all relevant statutory duties. For example, they ensure that leaders scrutinise safer recruitment practices to make sure that safeguarding checks on trainees are carried out diligently.

Leaders and staff have many opportunities to develop themselves professionally and act as role models for continuous improvement. Appropriate training is made available to mentors. Leaders have also created a culture where staff feel valued and protected from undue workload, bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Leaders implement suitable quality assurance systems to check and improve the quality of its work. Leaders generally have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development within their provision.

## **Professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders set clear expectations for trainees' professional behaviour, attendance and commitment to learning. For example, trainees are taught how to recognise and respond professionally to increases in their workload during especially busy periods in school. They receive practical help with learning to recognise stress and how to take care of their wellbeing. This supports trainees' readiness to manage the realities of day-to-day teaching. Leaders seek to understand any barriers to attendance and work proactively with trainees to help find strategies to reduce the difficulties they face with attendance.

Leaders and staff provide effective pastoral support for trainees' wellbeing. They draw upon external advice and guidance when appropriate, so that trainees can access the support

they need to help with their completion of the programme.

Trainees learn about the professional behaviours and the wider responsibilities required of a teacher. They quickly develop habits and routines to ensure they behave with integrity and safeguard themselves as a teacher.

Leaders model how to foster a positive climate for learning. On the very rare occasions that bullying or discrimination happen at the provider, leaders address the concerns immediately and take appropriate action to ensure it is not repeated.

## **Next steps**

Leaders should sharpen their checks on how well trainees are learning the different parts of the curriculum so that trainees' next steps are identified and addressed with precision.

Leaders should make sure that feedback set for trainees links closely to what they learn in the ITE curriculum so it consistently helps trainees to improve in the right areas.

Leaders should ensure that trainees' individual needs are met consistently well by embedding a high-quality approach during both training at the centre and in teaching practice in schools.

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

Trainees build their knowledge and skills securely and they are generally well prepared for the realities of teaching in their chosen phase of primary or secondary education. Leaders begin to build a careful understanding of each trainee's context and needs right from the beginning of trainees' application process. Leaders get to know trainees well and, as a result, are generally able to tailor the course to meet each trainees' circumstantial, learning and wellbeing needs.

Leaders do all that they can to identify any barriers to learning. They actively seek out ways to help trainees to overcome any challenges they face. The spiral nature of the curriculum enables trainees to practise new learning and make connections with what they already know. They reflect on their progress routinely, including for example, during weekly professional development meetings with mentors. However, in some instances, curriculum expectations are not as clearly defined as they could be. This reduces trainees' understanding of precisely what they should know and be able to do as they progress through the programme. Equally, there are instances when the feedback that trainees receive does not provide them with an accurate understanding of their strengths and areas for further development.

Leaders are deeply committed to supporting any trainees at risk of falling behind. They take appropriate steps to support them and help them to catch up. Generally, trainees say that they feel well served by the care and guidance that they receive from staff. They report feeling welcome and how they are typically supported to access both the taught elements



and teaching experiences during the programme. Leaders' flexible and compassionate approach enables trainees to complete the programme. Trainees feel safe and able to thrive throughout the programme. They are typically ready for the next stage of their teaching career.

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## About this inspection

Trainees in both the primary and secondary phases are undertaking postgraduate routes.

There are 2 pathways on the PGCE postgraduate primary route: primary 3-7 and primary 7-11.

In both phases, the number of trainees is much lower than typically found in most providers of initial teacher education.

In the secondary phase, geography, English and biology are offered as specialist subjects.

The post-graduate certificate in education is accredited by Surrey University.

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 initial teacher training programme manager, course leaders and primary and secondary phase specialists during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with trainees, early career teachers and mentors.

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### Lead inspector:

Jo Brinkley, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspectors:

Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspector

James Broadbridge, 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 23 March 2026

## Number of partners and trainees

| Education phase              | Number of training partners / partner colleges | Number of trainees |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Primary                      | 0                                              | 6                  |
| Secondary                    | 0                                              | 11                 |
| 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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