

# Alban Federation

c/o Sandringham School, The Ridgeway, St Albans AL4 9NX

## Inspection dates

14 to 17 June 2021

## Inspection judgements

Primary and secondary age-phase combined

### Overall effectiveness

**Good**

The quality of education and training

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

## What is it like to be a trainee at this ITE partnership?

Trainees value the combination of school-based and centre-based training that they receive at Alban Federation. Trainees feel part of the school staff in their placement schools, and this is important to them. Equally, trainees feel well supported by the central team. Many trainees start their first years of teaching working in one of the partnership schools after successfully completing the training year.

The centre-based curriculum has been thoughtfully planned. Trainees are prepared for the practicalities and demands of teaching. There is a focus on developing positive behaviour management in the classroom. Trainees have several centre-based training sessions to deepen their knowledge and understanding of meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Trainees in the primary phase learn the basics of teaching reading using phonics. There is a clear link from the training through to the teaching practice in a classroom during the school placements. Trainees practise the teaching of phonics to small groups of pupils and classes to build on their theoretical knowledge in a structured way. Trainees become well prepared for and confident in teaching reading to young pupils.

There are clear and effective communication systems in place between the centre team, professional and subject mentors and trainees. Over this year, the central team has swiftly adapted their planned programme to ensure that trainees have not been disadvantaged by the restrictions of Covid-19 (coronavirus).

## **Information about this ITE partnership**

- Alban Federation provides training for eight primary and 42 secondary trainees during 2020/21.
- The partnership provides training in the five to 11 primary age range and secondary age range, including sixth form.
- There are 33 schools in the partnership.
- All trainees undertake the School Direct route to qualified teacher status.
- Nearly all schools in the partnership have been judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.

## **Information about this inspection**

- The inspection was conducted by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who met with leaders, those responsible for governance and spoke with the external moderator. Inspectors observed a strategic board meeting.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including evidence of trainees' work, the work of mentors and the centre-based curriculum.
- In the primary phase, inspectors completed focused reviews in early reading and the foundation subjects. In the secondary phase, inspectors undertook focused reviews in English, mathematics and business studies.
- Inspectors spoke with 22 primary trainees, secondary trainees and newly qualified teachers who had previously trained with Alban Federation
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys. This included 70 responses from members of staff and nine responses from trainees.
- Inspectors made visits to six schools to meet trainees, mentors and headteachers. Inspectors visited some lessons that were taught by trainees. They communicated with five professional mentors and 11 subject or class mentors from different schools. Inspectors spoke with four people who contribute to the central training provided to trainees.

## **What does the ITE partnership do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of what is working well and what still needs to improve further at Alban Federation. The strategic board is made up of headteachers from the partnership schools who hold the central team to account for the quality of the ITE curriculum. There is a collective commitment to help trainee teachers succeed.

The partnership has considered the ITE curriculum carefully for both primary and secondary trainees. There is breadth of coverage in the programme with trainees deepening their knowledge and understanding of the practicalities of teaching across the year. The links between the centre-based training and the school placement are seamless. Professional and subject mentors have a secure understanding of the content of the central training sessions and effectively build on these in the school placements.

Trainees have a wide range of starting points. Some start with prior experience of working in schools while others have previous expertise from other sectors. Alban Federation prides itself on offering a bespoke approach to their training and providing strong pastoral support. Trainees agree with this view. They feel well supported. Many trainees rightly talk about the flexibility, care and opportunities that being on the programme provides them.

The quality of trainees' reflections demonstrates that over time trainees are building their knowledge in the subject or phase. Mentors consistently follow the processes outlined by Alban Federation. Everyone works together to prepare trainees for the demands of teaching as a newly qualified teacher.

Trainees are effectively taught how to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, such as those with SEND and pupils for whom English is an additional language. In their placement schools, trainees have opportunities to develop their knowledge of helping pupils catch up after long periods of absence due to the pandemic. Some have been able to support vulnerable pupils during times of partial school opening, others have participated in remote teaching or learning different assessments for examination years. Trainees have relished these different opportunities.

Trainees are provided with up-to-date and pertinent teaching from the centre about how to teach. However, there is less emphasis on providing trainees with relevant subject-specific research that is needed to increase trainees' knowledge and understanding. Leaders' expectations for trainees' subject-specific and scholarly research is less clear in the school-based part of the curriculum programme. This results in some trainees having a more varied experience depending on the school-based mentors.

Leaders are changing when and how they assess trainees. They are ensuring that targets given to trainees do not use the teacher standards until their final assessments. The central team has already trained professional mentors in the new approach. Leaders have firm plans in place to train school-based mentors this term. There is some variability in the system used for setting targets for trainees, where some mentors continue to use the teacher standards to inform regular assessments of trainees.

## **What does the ITE partnership need to do to improve the primary and secondary combined phase?**

### **(Information for the partnership and appropriate authority)**

- There is not a clear and shared understanding of the subject-based knowledge and research for trainees when in their school placements. This results in variance in the amount of scholarly research a trainee becomes familiar with in their chosen subject.

Leaders need to ensure expectations of what subject mentors need to provide for trainees during the school placement are clear.

- Leaders need to provide subject mentors with the key knowledge of the core content framework. This is so they can set realistic and measurable targets for trainees which are not prematurely based on the teaching standards.

**Does the ITE partnership primary and secondary combined phase comply with the ITE compliance criteria?**

- The partnership meets the DfE statutory compliance criteria.

## **ITE Partnership details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	70182
<b>Inspection number</b>	10189270

This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) in accordance with the 'Initial teacher education inspection framework and handbook'.

This framework and handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from September 2020.

<b>Type of ITE Partnership</b>	SCITT
<b>Phases provided</b>	Primary and secondary combined
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 29 November 2012

## **Inspection team**

Kim Hall, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Webb	Her Majesty's Inspector

## Annex: Partnership settings, schools and colleges

Inspectors contacted trainees and staff at the following schools, as part of this inspection:

<b>Name</b>	<b>URN</b>	<b>ITE Phase(s)</b>	<b>Date joined partnership</b>	<b>Current Ofsted grade</b>
Sandridge Primary School	117148	Primary	September 2016	Good
Samuel Ryder Academy	138582	Secondary	September 2013	Good
Sandringham School	136609	secondary	September 2004, Lead School	Outstanding
Simon Balle All Through School	140294	Primary and secondary	Secondary September 2016 Primary September 2018	Outstanding
The Marlborough Science Academy	138042	Secondary	September 2007	Good
Garden Fields Junior Mixed and Infants School	117139	Primary	September 2016	Good

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