Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Technium 2,
Swansea
SA1 8PH

Date of inspection: November 2022-June 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership

The Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP) consists of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, working in partnership with 18 Lead schools and over 130 partnership schools situated broadly across the south of Wales from east to west. At the University, the APLP sits within the Institute of Education and Humanities, one of the four University Institutes.

The partnership provides three programmes of ITE, all accredited by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) from September 2019:

- PGCE secondary (11-18), with pathways in art & design, biology, business studies, computing & ICT, chemistry, D&T, drama, English, geography, history, mathematics, MFL, music, physics, RE, and Welsh
- PGCE primary (3-11)
- BA (Hons) primary education with QTS (3-11)

All programmes are full time and all are offered bilingually. The BA (Hons) primary education programme is a three-year course, the PGCE primary and secondary programmes are one-year courses.

There are 147 students following the BA Primary programme, of whom 46 are taking the course through the medium of Welsh. There are 165 students on the PGCE Primary programme with 20 studying through the medium of Welsh. There are 96 students following the PGCE Secondary programme, of whom 15 are taking the course through the medium of Welsh.

Summary

The Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP) was founded on a commitment to develop reflective teachers, who are research informed and ready to take on creative challenges.

The partnership benefits from the contribution of effective practitioners from across its lead schools. The initial co-construction of the partnership and its programmes resulted in programmes with a strong focus on linking theory and practice. There are valuable components to the programmes, such as 'Bridging', where students explore theoretical knowledge in the school context, 'Electives' and 'Alternative Experiences' provide worthwhile opportunities for students to explore particular aspects of teaching and learning and broaden their knowledge of education. However, the various elements of the programme do not link coherently enough, and the programme overall does not support students' progression sufficiently well.

The new academic director has been in post since April 2022, and since her appointment, she has had to manage changes in leadership personnel and structure. This along with the challenges of the pandemic and the downturn in recruitment to ITE has meant that strategic change has been impeded. Although the joint leadership of the partnership is developing, there remains a lack of clarity in lines of accountability. Provision and practice in the partnership have evolved since its formation. Leaders have responded positively to external evaluation and the feedback from students and staff to develop its work. However, self-evaluation and quality assurance are not sufficiently robust, and the partnership has not identified clearly enough its strengths and areas for development. As a result, there is too much variability in provision, in particular, in the quality of teaching and mentoring.

Despite these weaknesses, there are enough strengths in the work of the partnership to ensure that many student teachers make sound progress towards meeting Qualified Teacher Status. In a few aspects of provision, there is exceptionally strong teaching and mentoring, and a few students, particularly on the PGCE secondary programme are making strong progress and are developing into effective practitioners.

Recommendations

R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and planning for improvement

R2 Strengthen leadership and accountability across the partnership to drive improvement

R3 Improve the coherence of the programme, in particular to ensure that there is sufficient focus on developing students' phase and subject planning and pedagogy

R4 Improve the quality of teaching and mentoring

What happens next

The centre will draw up an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the partnership's progress in 12-18 months.

Main findings

Learning:

Many student teachers on all programmes make sound progress towards meeting Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). A few students on the BA primary programme and the PGCE secondary programme make particularly strong progress. On the PGCE primary programme, students' progress is generally weaker, and a few make only limited progress, especially those who are training to teach the 3-7 age range.

Overall, students are diligent in their lesson planning. Many plan for a sequence of lessons that takes suitable account of pupils' prior learning and engages pupils in a range of appropriate learning activities. Many are developing a useful range of teaching and learning strategies. They consider well how pupils may be grouped, and they design good quality teaching resources.

As they develop their skills, a majority of students begin to explore more imaginative approaches to teaching a variety of learning experiences, for example, when designing a lesson for a Year 3 class to enable pupils to create a visual representation of the rainforest, compiling images and facts and supporting pupils' independent problem solving. A few students plan particularly creative lessons drawn from their own knowledge and interests, for instance when a student organised a visit from a Welsh actor to their reception class so that they could ask him questions that they had devised. A minority of students are limited in how imaginative they can be in their planning because they feel constrained by the school's schemes of learning or because they are directed by the school to teach in a certain way. Although they generally are aware of the need to plan for different abilities of pupils in their classes, a minority of secondary students and around half of primary students do not identify suitable learning activities to help all pupils to make good progress.

Although many students plan appropriate learning experiences, around half do not identify the intended learning goals clearly enough in their lesson plans. These students tend to write objectives that are too broad or simply describe the tasks that pupils are to undertake. This hinders their ability to choose the most suitable teaching approaches and means that they are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in terms of pupils' progress well enough. A few students struggle to maintain pupils' engagement in the classroom because they are not clear enough about their learning objectives. In a minority of instances, students plan 'starter' and plenary activities in their lessons that do not connect well enough to the focus of the learning.

Most students training to teach the primary age phase have a suitable understanding of mandatory curriculum requirements. Generally, secondary PGCE students are developing their knowledge and understanding of GCSE and A-level requirements well. Many students have an appropriate knowledge of the Curriculum for Wales, and are beginning to explore cross-curricular links and to identify authentic learning contexts. However, in too many instances, students' planning reveals misconceptions held by schools about the Curriculum for Wales, for example, that individual lesson plans should detail how each of the four purposes will be developed. In some cases, this detracts from students identifying a clear learning focus for pupils. Generally, students' understanding of planning for the Curriculum for Wales is too dependent on

the quality of curriculum planning in partnership schools. Overall, their understanding of the principles of medium- and long-term curriculum planning is underdeveloped.

Overall, on the PGCE primary programme, students' understanding of Foundation Learning is too variable, and again, too dependent on what they experience in their school placements. In too many instances, students specialising in teaching the 3-7 age range do not plan well enough to meet the developmental needs of pupils or to help pupils to learn independently or through play. This is compounded by tutors and mentors not supporting students well enough to develop their knowledge of early years pedagogies.

In the classroom, nearly all student teachers forge productive working relationships with pupils. They are conscientious in getting to know individual pupils and have a suitable awareness of their needs, abilities and interests. Many are developing their 'teacher presence' well and appear confident in their role. They have established appropriate routines and manage their classes well. Many students communicate well. They are good language models for pupils and explain tasks and give instructions clearly. Many students are developing their questioning skills well. They are able to sustain pupils' engagement, and a few react flexibly and effectively to the needs of pupils during the lesson. However, a few secondary students and a minority of primary students do not respond well enough to the differing needs of pupils. In particular, they do not challenge the most able. A few students over direct the learning and do not allow pupils sufficient opportunity to learn independently.

Many students understand the need to check on pupils' progress regularly throughout the lesson. Around half do this proficiently, monitoring and supporting pupils' progress through targeted questioning and assessment opportunities, ensuring that pupils are aware of the intended learning. A few students rely too heavily on superficial checks on progress, and do not draw pupils' attention well enough to the features of successful work.

A few students are exceptionally proficient in their classroom practice. They have expert subject knowledge, engage students with ease and orchestrate classroom discussion proficiently, skilfully guiding pupils to make strong progress. These students understand that good planning is the foundation of positive interactions with pupils and ensuring that they make good progress in their learning.

Many student teachers have suitable literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Around half have a clear focus on building pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in a wide range of learning contexts. A minority of students plan well for the progressive development of pupils' skills. In English-medium schools, even though a majority of student teachers use simple words and phrases in Welsh, only a few plan effectively for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills.

In their university sessions, most students engage purposefully. They reflect on their school experiences and share these supportively with their peers. In sessions where tutors support students' critical thinking successfully, many students engage thoughtfully with educational texts and ideas. Many present their ideas clearly and respond to questions appropriately to explain their thinking and reasoning.

In their academic studies, many students are able to identify appropriate research methods and to provide a strong rationale as to why they chose them for their studies. In their assignments, many make pertinent links between theory and their school experiences. They reference a wide range of relevant and up-to-date educational texts and demonstrate a sound ability to draw helpful conclusions from a range of sources. Many students write clearly, constructing well-reasoned arguments. For some assignments, where students are given freedom to identify a theme, they do not always choose a focus that is worthy of investigation, and this leads to outcomes that are too superficial or limited in value.

Through learning experiences such as the school-led 'bridging' sessions, many students demonstrate a good understanding of national priorities and develop their knowledge of whole-school issues. They reflect thoughtfully on how their own experiences of teaching are contextualised and many make insightful observations about the connections to their own phase and subject, for example by considering how they may contribute to whole-school ambitions, such as developing pupils' creativity. Most students engage well with pre-reading activities and link them purposefully to their experiences in school. A minority ask pertinent and interesting questions of their tutors and school staff.

Most students training to teach through the medium of Welsh are confident and fluent in the language. They communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively, use key terminology accurately and in well-considered contexts. Students training to teach in English medium contexts have a clear understanding of the importance of Welsh. They are enthusiastic about the sessions they receive from 'Rhagoriaith', the University's Centre for Welsh Language Services. Many primary students and a majority of secondary students feel that they are developing their Welsh skills well. However, overall, students training to teach in English-medium contexts do not use their Welsh skills often enough in school.

Well-being and attitudes to learning:

Most student teachers forge positive professional relationships with their mentors and tutors. They value the role that their mentors play in supporting their well-being and mental health. Many students are clear about the wide range of university student services that are available to them. Students welcome the support provided in the university and feel that this is responsive to their needs, but they are not always certain about where to turn for support when on school experience. In addition, the variability in the quality of mentoring and tutor support has impacted negatively on the well-being of a few students.

Nearly all students have a good understanding of the importance of a work-life balance, and in general, most students manage their well-being needs appropriately. They value the support and guidance from mentors and tutors to encourage this. However, a minority of students, particularly those on the PGCE programme, say that they struggle to meet the competing demands of assignments, lesson planning and evaluations.

When given the opportunity, a majority of students contribute their views to the partnership, for example with issues regarding the programme design and timetabling. Student representatives take their role seriously and represent their

peers sensitively. They have received helpful training and advice and understand their responsibilities well. They seek the views of their peers and share any concerns raised in meetings with tutors and the strategic board. They feed back to their fellow students in a timely manner, sharing the outcomes of meetings and any changes to the provision.

Most students feel safe and free from harassment at university and in schools. They have a suitable understanding of the required safeguarding and child protection procedures. For example, they receive induction on the school safeguarding arrangements.

Most students understand the importance of pupils' well-being and its impact on their ability to learn. They use the information from the taught programme alongside their academic assignments to deepen their understanding of the development of the 'whole child' and the contribution of schools and specialist agencies to this, for example, when investigating a 'School of Sanctuary' project in a local school that welcomes and supports individuals seeking safety in the local area. During school experiences, student teachers pay appropriate attention to planning and implementing suitable strategies to support pupils' well-being.

Nearly all students are generally positive about the profession. They show high levels of commitment and have suitably professional attitudes. Across all programmes, most students engage well in many taught sessions. They work well with their peers, respond well to questions and contribute positively during discussions, for example when sharing findings from research.

Most students are developing a good understanding of professional values. They are gaining a beneficial insight into whole-school life through aspects of their programmes, such as 'bridging' and the 'phase swap'. During their school experiences, students work well with school staff. They aim to become full members of the school community, engaging well in joint planning activities, attending staff meetings, parents' evenings, and professional learning events. Most students endeavour to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as school clubs and trips. In the best cases, students have taken an active lead in supporting the development of school staff, for example enhancing outdoor provision such as the forest school area or providing staff training on digital skills.

Many students are developing a good understanding of approaches to research and enquiry. Many students are developing a clear understanding of the important role research plays in their day-to-day teaching. They understand well the importance of adhering to ethical principles. A minority of students use research findings to influence their lesson planning, for example when exploring the pros and cons of using concept cartoons to scaffold learning for low ability pupils.

Most students are conscientious in tracking their progress. They take good account of their mentors' evaluations and the personal targets they set in their ongoing reflections, noting when and how they have made progress. Many are frank about what they are doing well and what they need to improve. They are diligent in keeping their learning journals and reflect thoughtfully in the logs they keep of their professional learning journey. They often make pertinent connections to educational research in their reflections. Many students consider pupil progress in relation to

various theories of learning. A minority do this skilfully, for example when examining the development of pupils' cognitive schema. In their assignments, many students explore relevant topics, linking theory and practice well. They reflect on their school experiences in light of their reading, for example when examining the relationship between their school and its local community. However, in the weekly evaluations that students make of their lessons, they do not focus well enough the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress. They do not analyse well enough the extent to which their teaching approaches enable pupils' learning. In some instances, this is because these evaluations tend to focus on the targets set for them by their mentors and not on their own analysis of the effectiveness of the lesson or series of lessons. They rarely make links in these lesson evaluations to what they know about educational theory.

Nearly all students' attendance during their school placements has been good. However, student attendance during university taught sessions is too variable.

Teaching and learning experiences:

The partnership at Yr Athrofa has developed programmes for initial teacher education based on a clear rationale and conceptual framework. Although the curriculum provides sufficient opportunities for student teachers to achieve QTS and includes an appropriate balance between school-based and university-based activity, these are not always linked together well enough.

There is a strong focus on research and enquiry and the programme modules develop students' understanding of theory and research suitably. Students have appropriate opportunities to link theory and practice in a purposeful way and they are encouraged to use research when planning lessons and engaging with the taught aspects of the course. 'Bridging' sessions aim to support and provide a structured approach to this aspect of the programme. This component of the programme is co-constructed and co-delivered by university staff and network leads and promotes an effective blend of theory and practice. Student teachers and school mentors value this opportunity to meet, test and then share approaches to teaching and the curriculum that they have developed and experienced. These activities provide an effective platform across phases and subjects to explore educational theory, practical experiences and to dispel myths. In addition, the 'bridging' process has enabled student teachers to contribute to, and understand, whole school aspects such as planning for improvement and curriculum planning. However, mentors and senior mentors do not have sufficient knowledge of the taught programme in university. Overall, the programme lacks cohesion between theoretical and practical elements of the course.

Generally, programmes provide an appropriate balance between school experiences and taught elements. During the taught programme, there are opportunities for students to learn in cross-phase and cross-subject groups. While time spent in joint sessions is useful, students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their subject or phase-specific pedagogy. This is particularly the case on the secondary PGCE programme. In addition, there are too few links between students' learning in their subject studies and the development of this knowledge, understanding and skills while on school experience. As a result, students depend on schools to fill gaps, particularly in their subject knowledge and subject pedagogy. Consequently, student

teachers' experiences vary depending on the schools' level of support. In addition, some taught content is not matched sufficiently to students' needs, is too phase specific for the whole group to benefit from or is not covered at the most appropriate times.

Students benefit from valuable opportunities to enhance their curricular experiences. For example, the partnership provides appropriate enrichment opportunities for students, such as through 'electives' when they develop a deeper study of particular aspects of teaching, through 'phase swap' activity, and through the 'alternative teaching experiences' they receive outside of a school setting.

All programmes provide appropriate opportunities for students to engage with the Curriculum for Wales, including understanding key elements, such as the four purposes and the pedagogical principles. However, overall, staff and students' understanding of Curriculum for Wales is too variable. In addition, although basic elements of Curriculum for Wales are well understood and referenced in isolation, such as the terminology around four purposes and progression steps, how this relates to practice is unclear and students are developing misconceptions that are not challenged well enough by tutors and mentors.

Student teachers receive appropriate immersion and enrichment sessions within the university taught programme to improve their own Welsh language skills. They benefit from the expertise of the 'Rhagoriaith', whose staff support students' progress well against the Welsh language competency framework.

Whilst the partnership provides a few appropriate opportunities for student teachers to develop their own literacy, numeracy and digital skills, this provision is generally informal in nature. Furthermore, overall, there are too few opportunities for students to develop their understanding of how to support the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills in the classroom.

Although there are appropriate informal arrangements to review the curriculum, for example in response to student teacher feedback regarding workload and well-being, the partnership does not take a strategic enough approach to curriculum planning. As a result, it is difficult for leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and to make improvements to benefit students' progress.

Across the partnership, the quality of teaching and mentoring is too variable. In primary programmes for undergraduate and PGCE students, the quality of university taught sessions is generally good. However, the quality of mentoring for primary students during school experiences varies too much. Secondary PGCE students benefit from stronger mentoring when on school experience, while university taught sessions for these students vary too much in quality. Where teaching and mentoring are strongest, students develop their teaching skills effectively and develop an understanding of the links between theory and practice.

Most tutors develop positive working relationships with students during their university taught sessions. They often provide an inclusive and engaging learning environment that promotes students' participation successfully. Many tutors demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their subject or phase-specific areas. They plan worthwhile sessions which take account of students' prior

knowledge and help them develop their understanding of effective teaching approaches. A majority of tutors model teaching strategies purposefully. For example, they use a range of questioning techniques to probe students' thinking and develop paired and group work to promote discussion, reflection, and active participation in sessions.

In a very few instances, teaching is outstanding. The vibrant presentation of concepts, such as creativity, and the practical nature of the learning experience inspires high levels of engagement and student progress. Tutors in these sessions use intuitive questioning that probes and nurtures students' reflection and critical thinking, linking theory and practice extremely well. For example, they focus adroitly on developing students' understanding of Curriculum for Wales, associated pedagogy and how learning relates to progress towards the professional standards. Through their actions in these sessions, tutors model the professional attributes required to be a highly effective teacher. A few tutors also make pertinent reference to their own research. This enriches their teaching, promotes the importance of scholarly enquiry and engages students meaningfully in recent and relevant research.

In a few sessions, teaching is not effective enough. In these sessions, tutors do not plan well enough and do not have clear expectations for students' learning. As a result, progress in sessions is more limited. In a few instances, tutors' lack of subject or phase knowledge limits their capacity to take advantage of learning opportunities. For example, they lack the confidence to challenge misconceptions about pedagogy and Curriculum for Wales. In these sessions tutors do not model effective teaching well enough and miss opportunities to help students make links within their learning. Tutors do not always plan well enough to support students' understanding of effective lesson planning which focuses on what pupils will learn rather than what they will do.

The partnership provides an appropriate range of tasks and assignments to help students make links between theory and their experiences in school. Where these are most effective, they help students consider the impact of theory on classroom practice, including pupils' progress and well-being. These assignments have a positive impact on students' teaching during school experiences. However, in other instances the topics and themes selected by students do not help them to develop their thinking and teaching. Most tutors mark assignments suitably in line with agreed assessment criteria and offer helpful feedback on the features of academic writing. However, in general, feedback focuses more on students' academic and writing skills rather than on the development of their knowledge and understanding of teaching.

Most mentors develop positive and supportive working relationships with students when on school experience. A majority of mentors accurately and beneficially support students to identify strengths and areas for development in their teaching. Guidance documentation and training provided by the partnership are beginning to impact positively on the quality of mentors' learning conversations with students. In the few best examples, mentors help students consider the impact their teaching is having on pupils' learning and progress. These mentors probe and deepen students' thinking through effective questioning which helps them to reflect on teaching and make links between theory and practice. A few mentors, particularly in secondary schools help students to identify clear, well-defined targets which take account of students' differing stages of development. However, in a minority of instances, mentoring is not

effective enough. In these cases, feedback provided to students is too descriptive, lacks focus or, on occasion, is too generous. Targets and evaluations do not help students to make progress over time. In addition, in a few schools, mentors' understanding of the most effective approaches to teaching the youngest pupils is a concern. As a result, students do not always develop a strong enough understanding of how best to facilitate learning for pupils in foundation learning.

Overall, many senior mentors coordinate school experiences for students in their school well. They organise helpful learning experiences for students, using the expertise of staff within the school effectively and support mentoring through joint observations with class mentors. In a few examples, senior mentors moderate mentoring across their school proficiently. They help class and subject mentors develop their coaching and mentoring skills. For example, they model effective feedback sessions, provide exemplar written feedback and monitor the quality of learning conversations between students and mentors. This has a positive impact on the quality of mentoring and the progress students make.

Care, support and guidance:

The partnership's aim, to develop student teachers who are research-informed, reflective and committed to lifelong professional learning for the benefit of children and young people is at the heart of its work. All programmes encourage students to reflect on their own educational backgrounds and consider their own philosophies of education as they embark on their professional journey.

Elements of the programme, such as 'bridging' and 'electives', provide valuable structured opportunities for students to develop a wide range of core professional values and behaviours. These aspects of the programme are suitably designed so that students develop effective collaborative behaviours, for example, through peer-to-peer learning, and working closely with a range of practitioners in a variety of educational contexts.

There are beneficial opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills and commitment to 'leading learning' as teachers. These include contributing to the partnership's 'Aiming for Excellence' conference, where they present their action research alongside keynote speakers, and leading workshops for their peers on a range of topics, such as additional learning needs. Partnership staff encourage students to share their subject expertise more widely during their school experience, for example by contributing to cluster schools' areas of learning and experience networks. Students have regular opportunities to contribute to the partnership, through their role as 'student collaborators'. However, in too many instances, the partnership responds too slowly to their feedback and suggestions.

A core feature of all programmes is how they promote student teachers' engagement with educational literature. They introduce student teachers to useful practical methods to help them to evaluate relevant research and to reflect on educational theory. While all programmes provide valuable opportunities for students to develop professional dispositions, such as considering ethical behaviours when carrying out their research projects, the BA Primary programme, in particular, is planned carefully for progression in student teachers' research skills development. On the PGCE programmes, provision does not always take good enough account of students' prior

experiences of conducting research. Furthermore, the timing and requirements of assignments are not planned well enough. As a result, a minority of students feel overwhelmed by the challenges of their workload.

There are numerous opportunities for student teachers to reflect on their personal and professional growth as practitioners in all programmes. However, because there are too many disparate processes to log their thoughts that do not link well enough, student teachers find it challenging to reflect systematically on their learning and progress. The multiple formats also make it difficult for the partnership to know how well students are developing their critical reflection skills.

The partnership has secure systems for identifying, at an early stage, student teachers who are making insufficient progress. There is a clear structure for managing learning support and a range of suitable methods of communication to ensure that tutors have a joined-up approach to providing support for individuals and groups of students during university-based parts of the programme. The partnership works effectively with centralised support services to ensure students receive comprehensive information about the broad range of services they can access in person and online. On the BA Primary programme, the flexible personal tutor programme of study helps tutors to respond well to potential student needs at various points within their programmes.

In general, tutors monitor individual student teacher's well-being, including their professional behaviours, appropriately across all programmes. There are suitable arrangements for managing students' conduct through the 'fitness to practise' process. However, currently, the partnership does not evaluate the effectiveness of the learning or well-being support it provides on students' progress and outcomes. While there is a system for tracking and monitoring students' progress, the information is not always comprehensive or secure due to a lack of rigour in the partnership's quality assurance and moderation processes.

Lead schools and school-based mentors provide strong support for student teachers' well-being. The 'team around the student' approach is helpful for school staff to know who they can contact if they need advice or guidance to support student welfare. However, many PGCE students find this approach too complex. They do not understand the model well enough and often struggle to receive timely support to their queries or requests for help during their school experiences. Currently, provision for supporting student teachers to manage their workload is limited. The programme makes it clear to student teachers that they need to take responsibility for their own learning. However, there is limited guidance to enable students to improve their personal literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

There are appropriate arrangements for making adjustments to support student teachers with additional learning needs during their university and school-based experiences. However, the partnership's processes are not robust in ensuring there is sufficient and timely support for those student teachers whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement. The provision of reasonable adjustments for student teachers with additional learning needs (ALN) or caring responsibilities while on school experience, for example, is too reliant on the proactiveness of individual schools.

The partnership offers well-planned opportunities for student teachers to understand important issues relating to equality, diversity, equity and social justice. These help students to recognise how effective teaching and professional practice supports pupils to overcome barriers to learning. The partnership is beginning to put suitable policies and procedures in place to ensure that students are free from harassment and discrimination.

The partnership has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding, including providing training for all students on how to keep pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation. Nearly all partnership schools provide students with a thorough briefing on their child protection procedures at the start of their school-based experiences.

Leadership and management:

Senior leaders in 'Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership' have a strong commitment to providing initial teacher education captured in their motto 'Trawsnewid addysg, trawsnewid bywydau'. They have an appropriate vision for developing teachers who can think critically and engage with research, and are communicating this suitably across the partnership. The partnership is outward looking, working with other institutions such as the School of Education in Glasgow University in the development of its work. In general, leaders have a good understanding of national priorities and keep these in mind in their planning.

Since her appointment in April 2022, the academic director has taken suitable steps to tackle various issues, such as improving timetabling and strengthening communication with staff, schools and students. She demonstrates a strong commitment to the partnership and has a suitable vision for its future direction. Senior leaders and governors within the university are supportive of the academic director. However, she has too many responsibilities, including, up until recently, the line management of 21 members of staff. This restricts considerably the amount of time she has to work strategically.

The partnership has a suitable leadership structure comprising an executive board and strategic leadership group, each comprising school and university representation. The work of the partnership is divided into key areas, each with a strategic lead. While the leadership structure is generally appropriate, the boundaries of the leadership groups often overlap, and individual responsibilities are not defined clearly enough. This limits their ability to work strategically and means that lines of accountability are not always clear enough. Furthermore, the work of the strategic lead groups is not focused well enough on the most important areas for development, and certain aspects such as the programme content and structure, are overlooked. The partnership has recently made changes to improve leadership structures, roles and responsibilities, but it is too early to see the impact of these changes.

The shared responsibility for leadership of the partnership between schools and the university is developing. However, leaders do not focus strongly enough on the quality of provision offered to students and lines of accountability across the partnership are not clear enough. As a result, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and mentoring student teachers receive.

The joint leadership of the partnership is developing suitably. Leaders from lead schools collaborate with their counterparts in the university and communicate well with stakeholders. They have a beneficial influence on the school-based programme and engage in wide-ranging discussions about pedagogy, including the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. However, they do not currently have enough oversight of, or influence on, the content of the programme taught in the university. There are clear pathways for the selection and deselection of partner schools. However, it is not clear how school leaders in partner schools are held to account for their performance. Performance management for university staff is focused suitably on their academic work. However, these arrangements do not take good enough account of the quality or impact of tutors' teaching.

Leaders and governors manage the partnership's finances successfully. They ensure that funds are directed to support students' learning. The partnership pays suitable attention to the recruitment of Welsh medium students and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The partnership engages in some useful self-evaluation processes and collects valuable data and information for that purpose. For example, leaders use various sources of evidence, such as student surveys, mid-module reviews and analysis of external examiner reports to reflect on the partnership's work and make improvements based on the findings.

Leaders have access to a helpful dashboard that presents relevant data in an accessible format. This is informing self-evaluation processes well and these have been further developed to incorporate additional data sources. However, in general, the partnership does not make use of a suitably comprehensive range of evidence on which to base their self-evaluation findings, in particular first-hand evidence. There are notable gaps in the information gathered. These gaps include information on student attendance, the quality of students and tutors' teaching and the quality of mentoring. Because leaders focus on too narrow a range of evidence and there is a lack first-hand evidence, they are unable to triangulate their findings sufficiently to come to precise evaluations.

The partnership is beginning to develop its approach to understanding and improving the quality of mentoring and recent developments are beginning to have a positive impact. The partnership also has mechanisms in place to share good practice, although the identification of such practices is not always robust.

Currently, all partners are not sufficiently involved in self-evaluation and improvement planning processes. The role of the lead network school in assuring the quality of the provision and student teacher outcomes is at a very early stage of development. Partnership meetings and 'good to go' days provide useful opportunities for partnership staff to identify and discuss aspects for improvement. However, actions arising from these meetings are not sharp enough and issues are not followed up in a timely enough manner.

The partnership has identified suitable overall priorities in its improvement plan, such as improving mentoring. Because the issues are not identified specifically enough, this makes it difficult to plan clearly to improve areas for development or to build on strengths. Leadership working groups are tasked with improving specific aspects of

the partnership's work. However, action plans do not include completion dates, which makes them difficult to monitor and does not make expectations clear. In addition, actions are often too operational.

Despite the fact that there are pockets of helpful work to support self-evaluation activities, these can be repetitive and the information and findings from different aspects of this work are not brought together in a systematic way to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the partnership's effectiveness. Overall, leaders do not have a sufficiently comprehensive and robust understanding of strengths and areas for improvement across all aspects of the partnership's work. As a result, planning for improvement is not suitably precise or targeted.

Championing research in education is a core value of the partnership. Staff are involved in a wide range of national projects, such as Camau i'r Dyfodol (Steps to the Future) project which supports the development of the Curriculum for Wales, and contributions to the National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP) and the national master's in education programme.

Partnership staff value the wide range of professional learning offered by Yr Athrofa. Nearly all university partnership staff participate regularly in developmental activities and opportunities to engage in scholarly activity. Most have either achieved, or are studying for higher academic qualifications, one in three of which are at doctoral level. The partnership encourages school ITE staff to undertake academic study by offering funding to support participants. The university provides valuable opportunities for school staff to engage with research projects across a variety of themes. Ideas and emerging findings from enquiry are shared in many ways, including discussion at leadership meetings, co-construction days and through a helpful newsletter issued across the partnership.

This academic year, the partnership relaunched a peer coaching scheme for university staff which supports professional development by grouping 'triads' of tutors to explore specific aspects of their practice. This work is beginning to help identify the professional learning needs of staff, but this is at a very early stage of development. Overall, professional learning for university tutors is not based well enough on developing effective practice in ITE.

The 'bridging' component of the programme provides a worthwhile opportunity for university and school staff to work together to develop aspects of the programme. This is useful in helping university staff to stay abreast of current school issues, and supporting school staff to be aware of aspects of educational research.

To improve mentoring, the partnership is developing a beneficial graduated approach to mentor training and development. The ambition is that all mentors are trained at the first level, with master's credits available for two higher levels of learning and the highest grade intended for those with leadership responsibilities in mentoring. This year, the partnership has made significant headway with this training, with more than 100 mentors trained at grade 1 level and a significant number of staff in lead schools undertaking the grade 2 training.

Recently, the partnership has designed a new mentor handbook. This identifies clearly the roles and responsibilities of all ITE staff in the development of student

teachers, including the monitoring of mentor practice and quality expectations. The handbook provides valuable guidance, rooted in best practice, about how to develop productive professional relationships and effective mentoring skills. This is beginning to have a positive impact on mentoring practice, particularly on developing mentors' skills in building a 'learning conversation' with their students where they encourage critical reflection. However, a minority of mentoring is still not effective enough. The partnership contributes purposefully to fostering professional learning in education. Staff and students benefit from events such as the 'Aiming for Excellence' day and the 'Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing' conference which provide opportunities for school practitioners, students and leading educational professionals to present and discuss their research.

Although the partnership invests heavily in professional learning, overall, it does not evaluate well enough the impact that this work has on the quality of teaching and mentoring and on students' progress.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

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