



part of Independent Schools Inspectorate

# **International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection report**

**St. Mary's University**

**March 2026**

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## Summary of iQTS inspection and grading

St. Mary's University was inspected by The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), a Department for Education (DfE) approved iQTS inspectorate, referred to in this document as 'the inspectorate'.

The inspection took place between 16 and 19 March 2026. The inspectorate assessed the provider's iQTS provision to be:

### **Grade 2**

**The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents.**

**The quality of leadership and management, and the quality of the programme design and delivery, meet all requirements and may exceed in some areas.**

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## Purpose of iQTS inspection

The purpose of iQTS inspection is to:

- ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the:
  - [iQTS criteria](#)
  - [Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework \(ITTECF\)](#)
  - [iQTS Teachers' Standards](#)
- assess and evaluate the effectiveness of:
  - provider leadership and management
  - programme design and delivery
- give independent external assurance that iQTS provision meets DfE's quality expectations and legal requirements
- protect and maintain the integrity and reputation of the quality of iQTS
- identify key strengths and where relevant, provide recommendations to the provider on what it should do to improve
- inform:
  - trainees considering undertaking iQTS
  - schools considering employing iQTS trainees or partnering with an iQTS provider as a placement school
  - parents with children attending a school staffed by iQTS trainees or iQTS holders
  - governments and organisations who have an interest in iQTS quality and standards

The inspection of a provider's iQTS provision and its subsequent grading is entirely separate from the inspection and grading of its domestic initial teacher training (ITT).

For more information, read the [International qualified teacher status \(iQTS\): inspection policy - GOV.UK](#) in full.

## Information about this iQTS provider

St. Mary's University, Twickenham is an initial teacher training (ITT) provider accredited by DfE to deliver qualified teacher status (QTS) programmes in England.

DfE approval for iQTS delivery is an extension of St. Mary's University's domestic ITT accreditation. The provider was approved to deliver iQTS in the academic year 2024/25 and is now in its second year of iQTS delivery.

In the academic year 2025/26, St. Mary's University offers iQTS training in the following countries:

- Argentina

- Austria
- Cambodia
- Canada
- Germany
- Panama
- Portugal
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- United Arab Emirates

A total of 19 iQTS trainees are undertaking the primary and secondary iQTS programme with the provider.

The provider also offers an academic award with the iQTS programme. However, academic awards are beyond the remit of iQTS inspection, and the inspectorate cannot make any comment on the quality of this provider's academic award.

## **In-person inspection activities**

The inspectorate's in-person inspection included:

- visiting one overseas placement school in Germany, partnering with the provider in the academic year 2025/26, to carry out joint lesson observations, observe mentor feedback, and meet with trainees and school-based mentors.

## **Remote inspection activities**

Inspectors conducted remote inspection activities with seven placement schools partnering with the provider. These activities involved meeting iQTS trainees, iQTS mentors and other members of school staff including senior leaders.

Inspectors met with iQTS provider staff, reviewed policy documents, curriculum plans, learning materials, resources on the virtual learning environment, application and suitability records, and trainees' online learning portfolios.

## **Summary of inspection findings**

The provider's overall grade is based on inspectors' assessment of the following three elements:

- compliance of provision with the iQTS criteria

- quality of leadership and management
- quality of programme design and delivery

Grade 1 is the highest grade that can be awarded and grade 4 is the lowest.

A full description of iQTS inspection gradings can be seen at Annex A.

## **Areas of strength**

- The well-sequenced, research-informed training curriculum supports trainees effectively in developing their knowledge of how to meet the diverse needs of pupils
- The intensive training and practice (ITAP) topics ensure that trainees are well-prepared to manage lessons, so pupils can learn in a calm and productive environment
- Strong relationships, responsive communication and thorough onboarding procedures ensure that new partner schools are supported well in introducing the iQTS programme.

## **Areas identified for improvement**

- Ensure that all mentors consistently engage in the core training curriculum so that they are fully prepared to support trainees' development
- Ensure that the assessment and development of secondary trainees' subject-specific knowledge is evaluated with sufficient precision so that gaps in knowledge are swiftly developed
- Fully implement strengthened systems to accurately establish and improve trainees' mathematics skills and competence.

## **Compliance of provision with iQTS criteria**

The provider is compliant with the iQTS criteria.

## **Quality of leadership and management**

1. Leaders have established effective systems for the recruitment and selection of trainees. They work closely with the university admissions team to ensure that applicants meet the required academic and English language entry criteria.
2. Appropriate procedures are in place to verify the authenticity of prior learning, to ensure that trainees have the skills and abilities to be successful on their programme.

3. Leaders ensure that necessary police background and safeguarding checks are completed before trainees begin the programme, to ensure their suitability to work with children and young people.
4. Applicants receive clear and accurate information about the iQTS provision, including entry requirements, age phases and subject specialisms. Applicants are impressed by the provider's swift response to their questions.
5. Recruitment procedures are well structured and implemented consistently. Interview panels ask applicants relevant questions to ensure the programme is well matched to their goals and aspirations.
6. Applicants complete a suitable assessment of their English skills as part of the interview process, to ensure they have an appropriate level of functional literacy. Leaders have very recently introduced an additional assessment of applicants' applied mathematical skills during the interview process. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this development.
7. Leaders ensure that applicants are treated fairly and respectfully throughout the admissions process. Trainees speak positively about the personalised support they receive during the application and enrolment process.
8. Leaders have established transparent and accessible complaints procedures which are consistent with the provider's other teacher training programmes. Complaints procedures are communicated clearly to trainees through induction, handbooks and via the provider's website.
9. Leaders have developed a well-considered, evidence-informed iQTS curriculum which meets the needs of trainees. The mix of recorded lecturers and live seminars provides trainees with a flexible programme that fits around their work and other commitments. Leaders adapt the curriculum where necessary to reflect the requirements and context of the many areas where the iQTS programme is delivered.
10. Leaders have developed a clear and effective management and oversight structure that ensures trainees benefit from a well-planned and well-implemented training programme. Through the International Strategic Board, selected partner schools meet with leaders to help shape the programme content and implementation. The School of Education's oversight mechanisms, along with the wider university committee structures, ensure that governance arrangements are effective in assuring the programme's compliance and the quality of the trainee experience.
11. Leaders have a clear understanding of relevant legislative requirements, including those specific to trainees' local contexts. Trainees understand the requirements of safeguarding guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education in the United Kingdom (UK) and how they compare with safeguarding guidance in the host countries.
12. Leaders have established effective partnerships with schools in multiple locations. Robust onboarding procedures ensure that trainees' placements

are selected with appropriate due diligence, including for curriculum breadth, mentor availability and the school's ability to support successful programme completion.

13. Partnership agreements clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the university and placement schools, ensuring shared expectations for the development of trainees. School partners value the accessibility and timely support they receive from programme leaders. They find the programme well-organised, with clear and responsive communication.
14. Leaders understand the importance of monitoring and supporting trainees' workload and wellbeing. They prepare trainees effectively for the demands of the course and provide support through link tutors, online resources and wider university wellbeing services. Trainee wellbeing is monitored frequently across each phase of learning, with support put in place where required.
15. Leaders have implemented a clear quality assurance framework to monitor, evaluate and moderate their provision. Leaders collect, analyse, and respond to feedback from trainees throughout the programme to ensure their needs are met.
16. Internal and external quality assurance processes, and the use of data, are effective in helping leaders to accurately evaluate the provision and to identify pertinent areas for development. Leaders have established a quality improvement process that includes relevant, specific actions to further improve the quality of provision and the trainee experience.
17. Overall, systems for quality assuring the quality of mentor support are sufficient. Leaders regularly monitor mentors' activities with trainees through the online e-portfolio and through monitoring and quality assurance meetings. This allows link tutors to check that regular mentor meetings and observations of trainees' classroom practice are taking place.
18. Leaders monitor mentors' completion of the core and supplementary mentor training curriculum. However, efforts to ensure training is completed promptly are not consistently effective. Opportunities for mentors to collaborate and refine their practice with other mentors are limited.
19. Leaders have appointed a suitably experienced and qualified external examiner to the programme who provides leaders with appropriate scrutiny and challenge to ensure the suitability of iQTS awards. Leaders have not formally responded to each of the external examiner's recommendations for improvement but have considered them in identifying their improvement priorities.
20. Leaders have secure procedures in place to ensure the award of iQTS is fully supported and accurate, following appropriate examination and assessment boards.

## Quality of programme delivery and design

21. Leaders are passionate about the iQTS programme. They have designed a well-structured curriculum that is securely mapped to the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECCF). The curriculum is appropriately designed to help trainees develop the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours they need for a sustainable career in teaching.
22. The curriculum is informed by research and enables trainees to explore evidence-based theoretical concepts alongside practical application. This helps trainees choose effective teaching strategies and approaches that meet pupils' needs.
23. Training modules, such as global citizenship and responsive teaching, support trainees to understand how to adapt their practice to different international contexts. Trainees learn to adapt their classroom approaches based on information from ongoing assessments. This helps trainees meet the diverse needs of pupils in an inclusive environment.
24. The training programme is coherently sequenced, with a weekly pattern of recorded lectures, live online seminars, professional reading, reflections and school-based application. These activities help trainees develop their knowledge and classroom skills in areas such as behaviour management, questioning and meeting the needs of pupils with specific learning needs.
25. Training is adapted well to trainees' contexts and school commitments, to ensure it is accessible across multiple time zones and geographical regions. Recordings are accessible to fit around trainees' other commitments, and live online seminars are offered at different times to provide opportunities for trainees to share ideas with peers from other schools and subject areas.
26. Overall, trainees are supported appropriately to develop their subject knowledge. Primary trainees benefit from a structured audit process that establishes an accurate starting point and identifies specific gaps in their subject knowledge. Trainees benefit from subject specialist tutor support and targeted follow-up resources that help them to address their individual knowledge gaps throughout the programme.
27. For secondary trainees, the subject knowledge audit relies more heavily on self-assessment, and the absence of clear benchmarks for some subjects increases the risk of gaps in knowledge not being identified securely. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the development and impact of secondary trainees' subject knowledge priorities are less robust in measuring progress over time.
28. Trainees engage with relevant content on literacy, early reading, and comprehension across the curriculum. They reflect on their own literacy starting points and consider how literacy is promoted in their settings. Leaders have rightly identified the need to further develop the systematic assessment of trainees' mathematics competence, ensuring the necessary support is in

place to help them develop the specific knowledge they need throughout the programme.

29. The programme of intensive training and practice (ITAP) is planned well and sequenced thoughtfully, enabling trainees to develop a secure understanding of key theoretical ideas and apply them in their own contexts. The initial focus on behaviour management is particularly helpful for trainees new to the profession. They learn how to manage the classroom, so pupils can learn in a calm, productive environment.
30. Trainees and mentors value the ITAPs, which support the refinement of classroom practice in areas such as questioning, adaptive teaching, and meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
31. Detailed training plans support trainees throughout each of the distinct foundation, development and consolidation phases of the iQTS programme. Plans guide trainees and mentors to build on the core curriculum content and apply their developing knowledge, skills and professional behaviours in the classroom. As a result, trainees quickly develop their confidence and competence in their teaching role.
32. Trainees are supported well to take on additional teaching responsibility, involvement in planning meetings and sustained classroom experience as the programme progresses. Trainees appreciate the flexibility and understanding shown when balancing training requirements with fuller teaching timetables.
33. Leaders have developed the link tutor role effectively to provide quality assurance of trainees' school experience. Link tutors maintain regular communication with trainees and mentors, supporting their wellbeing and workload.
34. Link tutors monitor trainees' online records closely and intervene promptly where trainees or mentors fall behind in record keeping. Holistic additional support plans are put in place quickly, where required, to help trainees achieve specific targets and get back on track.
35. Mentors receive a clear induction to each placement phase. They have access to an accredited, research-informed core mentor curriculum, with additional optional materials available to develop more advanced skills where appropriate to the mentor's level of experience. Where mentors have completed previous training, leaders tailor the training and induction requirements to avoid unnecessary repetition.
36. Mentors support trainees' development well. Weekly observations, review meetings, and coaching-style discussions help trainees refine their practice in areas such as timing, challenge, questioning, and meeting pupils' needs. Mentoring is aligned well with the ITAP focus and current teaching priorities.
37. Overall, there are adequate mechanisms for moderating the feedback that mentors provide to trainees based on observations of their classroom practice. However, mentors' timely engagement with and completion of the core training curriculum is inconsistent. As a result, not all mentors are

benefiting from the available developmental resources to ensure consistency of practice.

38. Targets set by my mentors are sometimes too broad and focused on the completion of tasks. Leaders have responded appropriately by offering additional training to help link tutors support mentors to improve the consistency and impact of the targets they set for trainees.
39. Effective assessment of trainees' development is well embedded throughout the programme. Trainees are assessed formatively through regular mentor observations, link tutor reviews and structured progress checkpoints. Clear formative assessment milestones exist for each core module, including presentations, subject knowledge audits and assessment against the Teachers' Standards. This helps trainees to understand how they are progressing. All trainees who have completed the iQTS programme have achieved Qualified Teacher Status.
40. Trainees and mentors have a secure understanding of the ongoing and final assessment processes of the iQTS programme. Leaders have established clear systems and internal and external moderation arrangements to ensure that iQTS awards are accurate and consistent.

## Next steps

The provider will work on the areas identified for improvement in this report. DfE will assess their progress within three months.

The provider will be inspected again in three to four years' time.

## Contact us

If you have questions about this report or any other aspect of the iQTS programme, please contact us at [iqts.policy@education.gov.uk](mailto:iqts.policy@education.gov.uk).

## Glossary of terms

Term	Definition/Explanation
<a href="#">Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF)</a>	The ITTECF framework sets out what trainee and early career teachers need to know, and know how to do, at the start of their careers. It captures the minimum entitlement to training for both in a single framework that will come into effect from autumn 2025. iQTS providers should continue to use the ITTECF as they did the <a href="#">ITT Core Content Framework (CCF, 2019)</a> ensuring that all framework statements are covered.
DfE	Department for Education.
Inspection	The process carried out by DfE-approved inspectorates to ensure that delivery of iQTS is compliant with the iQTS criteria, the <a href="#">Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF)</a> and iQTS Teachers' Standards.
Inspectorates	Independent companies who quality assure products and services in overseas and domestic education.
iQTS	International qualified teacher status.
<a href="#">International qualified teacher status Teachers' Standards</a>	Standards which trainees must meet by the end of the programme to be awarded iQTS.
<a href="#">International qualified teacher status: criteria for providers</a>	Statutory guidance on the criteria that providers and their partners must meet to provide iQTS.
<a href="#">International qualified teacher status (iQTS): inspection policy - GOV.UK</a>	Sets out DfE's inspection policy and gives information about how inspections are carried out.
ITT	Initial teacher training.
ITT provider	Initial teacher training provider accredited by DfE to deliver training leading to QTS.
QTS	Qualified teacher status.
Working days	Monday to Friday, excluding national holidays, which will differ overseas.

## Annex A: Inspection gradings

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
<p>The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery meet all requirements and exceeds in most areas.</p>	<p>The provision is compliant with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The quality of leadership and management and the quality of the programme design and delivery meet all requirements and may exceed in some areas</p>	<p>The provision does not fully comply with the iQTS criteria and other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>The non-compliance is minor, easily rectifiable and does not have a significant negative impact on the learning of trainees or their development into qualified teachers. It also does not significantly affect the quality of leadership, management or the quality of programme design and delivery.</p>	<p>The provision is not compliant with the iQTS criteria and all other core iQTS documents.</p> <p>Non-compliance has a significant negative impact on the quality of leadership and management and the quality of programme design and delivery. Recommendations are significant; therefore, reinspection will be required.</p>