

Durham University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address School of Education
Leazes Road
Durham
DH1 1TA

Unique reference number 70021
Inspection number 363151
Inspection dates 07–11 February 2011
Lead inspector Mark Williams HMI

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Reference no. 080190

© Crown Copyright 2011

Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of five specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high-quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. Initial teacher education has been provided at Durham University since the early nineteenth century. The present School of Education was established in 1977 when a secondary post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) was first established. Currently, three full-time programmes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) are provided. These are: the three year BA (Hons) degree in primary education with QTS; a one-year primary PGCE; and a one-year secondary PGCE. The BA course is taught at the university's Queen's Campus in Stockton-on-Tees. Both post-graduate courses are based at the main campus in the city of Durham. A small modern foreign language (MFL) programme runs alongside the primary PGCE. The secondary PGCE offers training in nine subjects: English, history, geography, mathematics, MFL, music, physical education, religious education or science (with pathways for biology, chemistry and physics) in the 11 to 16 age range with post-16 enhancement. While the higher degree was not inspected, both the primary and secondary PGCE form the first year of the university's MA with QTS.

A commentary on the provision

4. Trainees at Durham University are prepared outstandingly well to teach in their chosen age ranges. Trainees are committed to the course and their chosen profession. Both primary and secondary provision has improved since the previous inspection. Then good, both are now outstanding.
5. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes:
 - the trainees' very strong commitment and enthusiasm in developing their professional skills, knowledge and understanding
 - the high-quality training which prepares trainees very well to support pupils' all round achievement
 - the high levels of commitment across the partnership and productive dialogue which leads to very effective support and high-quality training for the great majority of trainees
 - the provider's very effective and timely responses to evaluation and national developments which have driven improvement in training and outcomes for trainees.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

6. Trainees embarking on a course at Durham University to teach primary aged pupils do so through one of two routes. The BA (Hons) degree is a three-year undergraduate programme. There are currently approximately 250 trainees on roll. The PGCE is a one-year course with the option, on successful completion, of moving onto the university's MA with QTS. A small MFL programme runs alongside the primary PGCE. There are approximately 80 trainees on the PGCE course.

Key strengths

7. The key strengths are:
 - the high-quality training provided by the university and the partnership which enables trainees to develop good levels of subject knowledge across the curriculum
 - the enhancement of high-quality training in mathematics and science and the taking of most effective measures which prepare trainees to teach phonics and early reading well
 - the commitment of the high-quality trainees to teaching and development of subject knowledge and their strong reflective practice
 - the innovative nature of the partnership which allows trainees to experience a range of schools and be well prepared to teach in a diverse society
 - the high-quality individual support for trainees which allows them to meet the Standards for QTS (the Standards) very well
 - the high-quality leadership of courses and programmes which uses a range of evaluations well to focus their work on sustaining high-quality outcomes for trainees
 - the provider's encouragement of applications from applicants who would not usually access initial teacher training courses and their highly-supportive arrangements to enable them to take their places on the courses.

Recommendations

8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider and partnership should:

- strengthen the trainees' potential to be at least good teachers by:
 - a) encouraging trainees to:
 - make clear in their planning and teaching their expectations of higher-attaining pupils
 - evaluate the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning
 - b) considering the timing of the school training centre coordinators' seminars so that they provide all trainees with opportunities to put into practice their learning in schools quickly.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

9. Trainees at Durham University are prepared very well to embark on a career in teaching. The provision is outstanding and leads to high -quality, reflective and employable practitioners. The trainees' ability to reflect on their own learning and how it impacts on their own practice is a particular strength. In addition, their commitment to teaching and the development of their own subject knowledge in order to teach children effectively are also strong features.
10. The courses are demanding and place a strong emphasis on research. Trainees are very clear about these demands and what is required of them. However, the university is not solely concerned with academic success when recruiting trainees: it is very much open to their potential. The provider's encouragement of applications from those who may not ordinarily consider higher education and the highly-supportive arrangements to enable them to access the course, through a foundation year course for example, are strengths of this provider. Its attempts to recruit from under-represented groups are enhanced by its close partnership with other providers and local authorities in the region through the 'Minority Ethnic into Initial Teacher Training' programme (MERITT).
11. The training provided by the university and the partnership is of high quality. It, coupled with strong and appropriate individual support, allows trainees to meet the Standards very well. Information gained at the application and interview stages is used well to provide a good baseline for each trainee and allows for any reasonable amendments, support for dyslexic trainees, for example, to be put in to place promptly.
12. The training at both the university and in schools is very cohesive, demonstrating why the effectiveness of the partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees is also a very strong feature of provision. Trainees rightly report how positive they are about centre-based training in English, mathematics and science. They say the 'theory is challenging' but it supports their work in school very well through tasks and assignments which they

complete. The result, as evidenced through discussions with trainees and observations of their teaching conducted by inspectors and partnership colleagues, is that they are developing their own subject knowledge in these subjects and the foundation subjects very well and are confident and successful in teaching phonics and early reading and writing. While challenging in content, training sessions at the university in areas such as behaviour management and working with parents provide trainees with plentiful opportunities to consider the practical implications for their work with children. Training at the university is enhanced further by the very effective use of serving headteachers and local authority representatives. Trainees have a secure understanding of the curriculum before and after the key stages for which they are being trained; for example, a clear overview of the Early Years Foundation Stage which is particularly helpful for those teaching in Key Stage 1.

13. Training in schools, monitored under the watchful eyes of school training centre coordinators, complements the university-based training very well. The coordinators take responsibility for a group of trainees in a small number of schools. This model of training and partnership has three advantages. First, and on the BA (Hons) course in particular, this responsibility continues for the full three years allowing coordinators to get to know the strengths and areas for development of the trainees well; trainees are very positive about this relationship. Second, the coordinators are very well placed to assure the quality of support given by class-based tutors. Third, coordinators also organise helpful seminars, often utilising the expertise of others in school, such as a subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator or the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. The result is that trainees make at least good progress in reaching the Standards. Nonetheless, even though trainees are able to access all seminars taking place over the duration of their course, the timing of these on the BA (Hons) course does not always allow trainees to put into practice quickly in school what they have learned.
14. The role of the school training centre coordinator is key to the success of what is an innovative partnership. While the inspection uncovered a very small number of inconsistencies, the quality of support given to trainees by those in this role is very good and enables the class-based tutors to make accurate observations about the quality of individual trainees teaching, the assessments that trainees make about their pupils' progress, and the progress each trainee makes from lesson to lesson. The result of this challenging support is that trainees identify well what pupils of average and lower ability, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are to learn in their lessons. They also consider carefully how well their lessons have been managed and resourced. Developing well, but not yet as sharp, is the ability of trainees to express their expectations of the more able pupils and to reflect on the quality of their pupils' learning.
15. Trainees benefit greatly from learning their trade and practising their skills in well-resourced schools and university accommodation. Trainees use specialist equipment in, for example, information and communication technology very well. Specific sessions, carousel activities covering the foundation subjects, and alternative placements support trainees' understanding of special educational

needs, the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the needs, for example, of pupils who speak English as an additional language, very well. These ensure that trainees are not only very well equipped to teach the breadth of the primary curriculum, but also that they are prepared to teach in the range of schools that is found in our diverse society.

16. One of the key factors in ensuring that the great majority of trainees make good progress in meeting the Standards, and thus their skills as teachers, is the excellent support they receive. This support includes well-established procedures for those trainees who experience difficulties for what ever reason. On a less formal basis, trainees displaying particular skill or aptitude are encouraged to shine. Examples of this include trainees with good subject knowledge in science conducting lesson observations in the role of subject leader and MFL trainees modelling French in their block experience schools. The results respectively included the science trainee improving her ability to focus on children's learning and, in the case of the MFL trainee, his pupils receiving good-quality teaching. Such features, coupled with trainees' preparedness to teach in this diverse society, demonstrate why the extent the provision promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and eliminates harassment and unlawful discrimination is judged, in line with other aspects of the provider's work, to be outstanding.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 1

17. The extent to which the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high-quality outcomes is outstanding. This is because of the excellent quality of leadership, which uses a range of evaluations very well to focus their work on sustaining the outcomes for trainees.
18. The deployment of resources by the provider is shrewd and effective. For example, the 'Leading Partners in Literacy' programme has been resourced above the levels provided by the Training and Development Agency to encompass more schools as partners. In addition, and at a time when higher education is facing constraints in funding, the recruitment of key staff to lead further developments in English, special educational needs and/or disability and inclusion has enhanced the already very well-qualified and experienced team.
19. The provider, making use of the commitment of colleagues across the partnership, evaluates its performance very well and values greatly the view of its stakeholders. It is very well placed to anticipate change and respond to local and national initiatives and developments. A number of examples demonstrate this. First, in terms of recruitment, the provider's collaboration with regional partners through MERITT has seen recent increases in the proportion of trainees from minority-ethnic backgrounds joining both the BA and PGCE

courses. In addition, and recognising regional need, the proportion of trainees who are on the courses having entered via access or the Foundation Year stands at around one-fifth. Second, through its recognised staff expertise the provider is very well placed to influence regional and national priorities, for example, in special educational needs and/or disability training and modelling phonics and early reading with other providers.

20. The provider has improved well since its previous inspection when it was judged to be good. It is now outstanding. It has taken the evaluations which trainees and school-based colleagues have made, very seriously, and not shirked from tackling some, which, in the past, had been less favourable. The result is that its plans are not only focused correctly on improving outcomes for trainees, they are very effective at doing so. Examples of their successes include: the enhancement of skills and subject knowledge in English, which has enabled trainees to teach phonics and early reading more confidently and effectively; improvements in mentor training; and the raising of the profile of foundation subjects so that trainees are well prepared to offer their pupils a broad curriculum. In mathematics and science – strengths at the time of the previous inspection – enhancements have been made further demonstrating the provider's excellent capacity. These enhancements include the strengthening in trainees of their mathematics subject knowledge and the focus on problem-based learning in science.
21. The provider measures itself against other trainers very well. External examiner reports and independent reviews are used very effectively to inform plans for the future. The provider assures the quality of its own work and that of the partnership through robust checks and balances. For example, the training that goes on in schools is subject to four layers of checks to ensure the great majority of trainees make good progress in meeting the Standards well. First, the day-to-day monitoring of trainees by class-based tutors which, over the course of the second block of school experience observed during the inspection saw, on average, around 12 lesson observations conducted over a five-week period. Second, the assuring of teaching quality judgements by school training centre coordinators. Third, the checking of the consistency in quality of the coordinators by university based quality-assurance tutors. Fourth, the appointment of external personnel to provide an independent view of quality. These checks are brought together under various committees with partnership representation to provide an over-arching view of the cohesiveness of training quality both in schools and at the centre. The provider further checks the quality of its schools through regular reference to Ofsted inspection reports and surveys which highlight, even if a school is judged to be satisfactory overall, there are other strengths, the quality of the curriculum, for example, which may make a training experience worthwhile.
22. Taking all things into consideration – in particular the commitment of trainees and trainers and the high-quality outcomes for trainees – this provider is very well placed to continue to introduce teachers into the profession: teachers who will make a real difference to the lives of children.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

23. The PGCE with QTS is offered in the 11 to 16 age range in the subject areas of English, mathematics, physical education, history, geography, MFL, religious education and science. For trainees who do not attain the full programme requirements there are two alternative qualifications, the Professional Graduate Certificate or the Post Graduate Certificate in the Theory of Education. The PGCE can form the first year of the Durham University MA with QTS programme.

Key strengths

24. The key strengths are:
- the trainees' very strong commitment and enthusiasm to developing their professional skills, knowledge and understanding
 - the very effective targeting of trainees' development needs through productive dialogue and high-quality training across the partnership
 - the trainees' well developed skills of reflection which enables them to evaluate their own practice and review the impact of their teaching on students' learning
 - the trainees' ability to meet the needs of all learners and make a strong contribution to support their all-round achievement
 - the very effective and timely actions by leaders which have successfully driven improvement in training and outcomes for trainees.

Recommendations

25. In order to continue to improve quality across the partnership and outcomes for trainees, the provider should:
- increase the impact of visits made by university tutors on quality assurance and the professional development of school-based tutors and mentors
 - share school-based good practice in training and quality assurance more widely across the partnership.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

26. The university is very effective in recruiting trainees with the potential to be effective teachers and in providing high-quality training across the partnership.

Consequently, trainees make at least good progress relative to their starting points and their attainment is high in almost all subjects. The large majority of trainees gain employment in partnership schools, which reflects the confidence of schools in the consistently high quality of Durham University trainees. Although the inspection was relatively early in the training year, inspectors were impressed with the professional qualities and knowledge that the trainees could already demonstrate through discussions and documentary evidence. Trainee characteristics emerging as strengths included their confidence in using a range of assessment techniques to check students' prior knowledge and current level of understanding. In addition, there is their awareness of potential barriers to students' learning, including those related to special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also showed an understanding of how to plan to meet learners' differing needs in the classroom, an ability to successfully address students' misconceptions, and a commitment to improving their own knowledge and skills through self-reflection and in response to feedback.

27. Trainees make rapid progress from the start of the course because the findings of recruitment are used well. For example, many trainees are directed to complete meaningful tasks that successfully begin to address gaps in their knowledge, skills or professional understanding before the taught programme begins. Similarly, university tutors make good use of information gathered at the recruitment stage and through the initial auditing of trainees' subject knowledge to inform planning for training sessions in order that training is well matched to trainees' development needs.
28. Trainees are overwhelmingly positive about the extent to which both university and school-based training contributes to their progress. Trainers have a detailed knowledge of trainees' development needs and there is very good coherence between the underpinning theory of QTS lectures, associated subject tutorials and school-based sessions focusing on practical application to classroom practice.
29. All members of the partnership fully understand their role in promoting trainees' progress and are highly committed to securing the best possible outcomes for trainees. Training provided by the university for both new and experienced school-based colleagues is well received and communication across the partnership is excellent. Both of these features are key factors in securing consistently high-quality training for trainees. Schools see the partnership with the university as mutually beneficial, noting the positive impact on the professional development of school staff and the opportunity to see trainees using innovative approaches in the classroom including new ideas for the use of information and communication technology. Trainees confirm the value of regular developmental professional dialogue with their subject mentor and other staff within a placement school in helping them to make good progress. Documents to support the assessment of trainees' progress are well understood by all partnership colleagues. Regular visits and face-to-face meetings involving university staff and school-based colleagues promote high quality and consistency in training and assessment.

30. There is a very supportive ethos amongst trainees with peer expertise used well to complement taught sessions. Trainees also receive input from subject specialists in schools to help them address gaps in their subject knowledge effectively. All trainees benefit from a primary placement experience at the start of the course which develops their understanding of the primary curriculum and transition issues effectively, while successfully raising their awareness of approaches to the teaching of early reading and systematic phonics.
31. Trainees appreciate how the contrast of schools between their diagnostic and main teaching placement broadens their experience. Their commitment to their own professional development is reflected in their proactive approach to maximising development opportunities beyond their subject by actively exploring any distinctive features of a particular school. In addition, enhancement experiences at the end of the course are effective in allowing trainees to explore areas of professional interest in more depth. University tutors draw on relevant research and make very good use of specialist facilities in partnership schools and the expertise of practitioners within the locality to ensure that training consistently reflects the most recent educational developments and current good practice.
32. The provider's multi-faceted approach to improving the effectiveness with which it promotes equality and values diversity, including additional appointments, has made a significant contribution to trainees' preparedness for teaching in a diverse society. The impact of this work was clearly reflected in trainees' discussions with inspectors and in trainees' very positive evaluation of recent training. The university has also made very good use of resources and wider partnerships to secure a marked improvement in the recruitment of trainees from minority-ethnic groups.
33. Trainees feel very well supported in relation to both their professional development and their personal needs. They are extremely confident that if an issue arose it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. This is echoed by school-based colleagues who were resoundingly positive about the timeliness and appropriateness of the provider's response if concerns regarding a trainee's progress were raised. The university has been flexible and sensitive in providing additional support for individuals as required, ensuring potential barriers to trainees' progress are overcome.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 1

34. Self-evaluation is accurate and used very effectively by the provider to identify those aspects of the course that work well and where further development has been required. Underpinning this incisive evaluation is a broad evidence base of robust quantitative and detailed qualitative data. Both university and school-based colleagues across the partnership are aware of their responsibilities in

relation to quality assurance and contribute effectively in these roles to inform action planning. However, in a small minority of cases there is scope to develop further joint-working opportunities during university tutor visits to schools for quality assurance and staff development purposes. As data to explore trends over time have become available, evaluation has become more refined, allowing the provider to analyse outcomes for trainees in detail to identify and address variation between groups. For example, the university correctly identified the need to improve recruitment procedures to increase completion rates in some subjects. Effective action has led to a significant reduction in the number of trainees withdrawing during the course and completion rates for all subjects are now above sector averages. Detailed trainee evaluations of each school placement are fed back to the respective schools to inform improvement and trigger additional support from the university, if required, to ensure high-quality training is sustained. In some schools there are examples of innovative practice with regard to trainee development which could be shared more widely across the partnership.

35. Innovative research-led practice is a key feature of the provider and this promotes trainees' confidence effectively to take risks and utilise creative approaches within the classroom. University tutors have worked relentlessly to ensure that trainees have the richest possible training experience by incorporating a wide range of activities beyond the taught lecture programme. This approach equips trainees very well with the skills and qualities needed to effectively support the all-round achievement of learners in the future.
36. Course developments have kept pace with changing expectations of initial teacher education with the extension of the PGCE to provide the first year of a Masters level qualification. Trainees have a very good awareness of national initiatives because all key aspects of changes to the educational landscape are carefully woven into the QTS lecture programme, with the scope and flexibility to respond to emerging developments during the course of the year. Inclusion issues, including training to teach students from a range of cultures, backgrounds and contexts are approached sensitively and in depth, ensuring trainees are well placed to adapt and adjust their classroom practice to meet the needs of different learners. The university has responded swiftly to ensure trainees receive high-quality training in relation to the teaching of early reading and to develop their understanding of systematic phonics. Subject training is similarly responsive to recent and forthcoming changes, for example, in relation to qualification and curriculum innovation through the use of high-quality external expertise and links with subject associations.
37. Leaders have taken decisive and effective action to fully address the areas for development identified at the time of the last inspection, for example, increasing the rigour of course evaluation. The provider has responded well to internal trainee evaluations and external surveys to bring about significant improvements to training and assessment. Feedback from the current cohort confirms the positive impact of recent action taken. Assignments and QTS lecture sessions have also been developed to better match trainees' development needs and learning preferences. Subject panels and focus groups play a key role in shaping course developments, ensuring that there is a shared

understanding across the partnership of current priorities. Collaboration with other regional providers and Gateshead local authority through the MERITT programme, combined with additional individualised support, has significantly improved the successful recruitment of trainees from minority-ethnic groups onto the course. The provider's measurable success in building on previously good performance and securing improved outcomes for trainees confirms the outstanding capacity of leaders and managers to secure further improvements.

Summary of inspection grades¹

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

| | | Primary | Secondary |
|---|--|----------|-----------|
| How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees? | | 1 | 1 |
| Trainees' attainment | How well do trainees attain? | 1 | 1 |
| Factors contributing to trainees' attainment | To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes? | 1 | 1 |
| | To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points? | 1 | 1 |
| | To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently? | 1 | 1 |
| The quality of the provision | To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality? | 1 | 1 |
| Promoting equalities and diversity | To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination? | 1 | 1 |

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

| | | Primary | Secondary |
|--|--|----------|-----------|
| To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes? | | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality? | | 1 | 1 |
| How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives? | | 1 | 1 |
| How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement? | | 1 | 1 |

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

Any complaints about the inspection or the reports should be made following the procedure set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk