

University of Bristol

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Graduate School of Education 35 Berkeley Square Bristol BS81JA
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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of 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. The University of Bristol works in partnership with 70 schools to provide secondary initial teacher education (ITE) courses. It offers Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) training in citizenship, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and science. There were 227 trainees on the PGCE course at the time of the inspection.

Provision in the secondary phase

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
 - the effective procedures to recruit well-qualified, reflective trainees with the personal qualities and intellectual capacity that gives them the potential to be good and often outstanding teachers
 - the high quality of personalised support from both the provider and partner schools that ensures that trainees' individual needs are met so that they make consistently good progress
 - the use of a formative tool that supports high-quality verbal and written developmental feedback from both university-based and school-based trainers
 - the very effective use of current practitioners from within the partnership to support the professional studies programme which effectively demonstrates to trainees ways of putting their theoretical knowledge into practice
 - the positive impact of university expertise on the professional development of teachers within the partnership schools and the wider local community
 - the strong support for the provider from schools in the partnership who value the supply of high-quality teachers.

Recommendations

5. In order to improve the quality of planning for further improvement the provider should:
 - take steps to reduce the variation in outcomes between subjects by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluation and subsequent analysis of data is sufficiently robust and thorough to identify strengths and weaknesses in each subject
 - using the analysis to inform improvement planning at both whole-provider and subject level which is clearly linked to maintaining or improving outcomes
 - consistently sharing the best practice across all subjects.

In order to improve the promotion of equal opportunity the provider should:

- ensure that all trainees gain a secure understanding of how to teach in a diverse range of contexts.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

6. Trainees' good attainment has been sustained over the last three years, with almost 90% of trainees being judged as good or better by the end of the course. The proportion of those judged as outstanding has increased steadily, but in 2010 so did the proportion judged satisfactory. Recruitment of good quality mathematics, science and modern foreign language trainees is more challenging than for other subjects, and these subjects account for about half the trainees. Retention rates are high, and the few trainees who do leave the course mostly do so for personal reasons. Nearly all trainees find employment quickly in a wide variety of schools. Many are employed in partnership schools, where they often find promotion quickly. Although there is variation in the outcomes for trainees across different subjects, and assessment in some subjects is slightly over-generous, this does not affect the overall attainment judgement. There is no significant difference in the attainment of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. The pass/fail borderline is secure.
7. Trainees are enthusiastic and ambitious to improve, with the intellectual capacity to develop into good and often outstanding teachers. They are receptive to the advice and guidance they are given and reflect on their practice, taking responsibility for their own development. In the classroom, relationships with students are relaxed but firm and trainees are beginning to develop effective strategies for managing behaviour. Trainees' understanding of the needs of students with learning difficulties is well developed for this stage early in the course. Many have good questioning skills to support differentiation, but they are less skilled at providing resources to meet the learning needs of individual students. Most are able to plan a sequence of varied and appropriate activities in lessons that will ensure learning. At this early point in the course, trainees' understanding of the use of assessment is, unsurprisingly, more limited. Evidence shows that trainees from previous years developed a secure understanding of the use of assessment by the end of the course, but this was the weakest area of their development.
8. Systems for selection ensure that high-quality, well-qualified trainees are recruited, with suitable attributes to develop into very effective teachers, who are readily employed both locally and further afield. Tasks set during interview enable applicants to demonstrate their broad skills and allow interviewers to assess suitability. Successful applicants have a strong commitment to succeed, as demonstrated by the high retention and employment rates. Even though half the trainees are from subjects where recruitment, nationally as well as locally, can be difficult, the provider meets its recruitment targets. There is evidence that some under-represented groups are being recruited, for example, a relatively high proportion of male trainees are recruited in English, and very good support ensures that they stay on the course. For some trainees, pre-course tasks are given to make up gaps in knowledge or experience, but the impact and quality of these varies between subjects. All trainees spend some time in a primary school prior to the course. They find the assignment linked to this helpful in understanding the needs of the younger secondary students they are trained to teach. Subject knowledge and

information and communication technology (ICT) audits are carried out at the beginning of each course and revisited regularly, although there is inconsistency between subjects, and less thorough coverage in some.

9. Trainees' progress is monitored at four assessment points during the year, using graded descriptors (pen portraits) that clarify the steps in progress over time. These descriptors are a very useful holistic, formative tool, which is used very effectively to enable trainees to see clearly strengths and areas for development, and also as a means of transferring information between placement schools. However, when the descriptors are used for measuring progress, not all mentors are interpreting them in the same way and there is currently no moderation of these assessments across subjects.
10. Overall trainees make good or better progress as the result of outstanding training, but there are differences between the outcomes in different subjects. Trainees in modern foreign languages and English consistently make the fastest progress, and the resulting outstanding outcomes are closely linked to the quality of training. In these subjects there is strong coherence between professional and subject studies, with very clear support and guidance given to mentors about how to make these links. As a result, their role in developing trainees' skills is exceptional, because they use theoretical knowledge to provide a rationale for activities in the classroom. Some subjects appear to be better than others at helping trainees move from good to outstanding. From the trainees' files in all subjects, progression over time is evident, through the mentor meeting discussion records and the targets set. However, sometimes mentors are not sufficiently focused on learning, and feedback may be more about teaching and behaviour management strategies. In the majority of cases, mentors plan timetables carefully so trainees teach unfamiliar topics, and subject knowledge sessions help to fill the gaps. Trainees are expected to take responsibility for developing subject knowledge themselves, but substantial support is provided in some subjects, for example, modern foreign languages.
11. The highly effective communication, described by schools as a strength, ensures that the provider is very effective at meeting individual needs, both academic and personal. Leaders ensure that as far as possible they accommodate trainees' personal circumstances without compromising the quality of the training they provide. When the progress of a trainee dips or there is a cause for concern, the response from the provider is prompt and effective, demonstrating extremely effective and efficient use of human resources to support trainees. Other resources are allocated equably.
12. The provider knows its partnership schools very well, and has worked with some for many years. Where possible, trainees are placed in contrasting schools, but this is more challenging in the subjects with higher numbers of trainees. Headteachers value their involvement in the partnership and speak positively of the trainees from previous cohorts that they have employed. There is inevitably some variation in provision between schools and between subjects. For example, some subjects provide exemplary training for new mentors and professional tutors, well supported with joint lesson observations

and extra visits, but this is not entirely consistent. In some schools, teachers other than mentors who carry out lessons observations are given very thorough training and support, and many of these teachers provide valuable subject development for trainees.

13. Very effective use is made of practitioners from schools, some of whom make a very imaginative and creative input to the professional studies course. Trainees particularly value those sessions where they are given practical applications that can be used in the classroom. For example, in the session about special needs and/or disabilities, students with these needs from one of the partnership schools came to talk to trainees. These sessions are followed up well by professional studies in schools.
14. Trainees say they are all treated equally and minority ethnic trainees say they are well supported. Recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups meets the provider's target. The proportion recruited broadly matches that of minority ethnic teachers in the city, but it does not reflect the proportion in the population. Although trainees' understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties is well developed for this point in the course, their understanding of the breadth of different pupils' needs that they might encounter in school and how to teach in a diverse society is more limited. There are insufficient schools within the partnership to provide all trainees with direct experience of teaching students from a range of cultural backgrounds. However, mentors do not always compensate for this by challenging trainees and asking them to consider how they might apply theoretical knowledge to a range of different practical situations, for example teaching a student at the early stages of learning English.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

15. Strong relationships with schools, built up over many years, mean that the provider knows the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership well. Self-evaluation information is collected from both trainees and members of the partnership. The formal data collected often lack a qualitative aspect, but opinions from trainees and professional and associate tutors are collected informally throughout the course, and school leaders and mentors say that prompt action is taken to make changes in provision when necessary. Subjects have undertaken a formal self-evaluation for the first time this year, but the quality and impact is very variable across subjects. Reports from external examiners are very positive but not sharp in identifying clear areas for improvement.
16. Actions taken by the provider in recent years have ensured that levels of attainment, retention and employment have all been maintained. Robust discussions, for example to decide whether the current structure of the course should be maintained, and the best use of the summer-term placements, have taken place over the last year. After identifying a need through feedback,

substantial changes have been made to the delivery, quality and content of the professional studies programme, which has led to a positive response from trainees. However, although much self-evaluation data is available, it is not analysed in sufficient depth to identify different strengths and weaknesses between subjects. There is, therefore, insufficient information to reliably and robustly inform planning, which at both whole-provider and subject level lacks a clear link to outcomes. This does not allow systematic and rigorous quality assurance or moderation across subjects, so the variation between them, identified at the time of the last inspection, remains. For example, the provider knows from previous trainees' feedback and through the newly qualified teachers' survey that, as is the case nationally, by the end of the course, skills in assessment and reporting are weaker than other areas. It is not clear, however, whether there are better outcomes and practice in developing these skills in some subjects than others.

17. The provider has a strong focus on academic outreach work, not just for partnership schools but across the local education community. Many teachers are involved, not just trainees and newly qualified teachers or those directly involved with the training programme. The provider's commitment to professional development programmes exemplifying the links between theory and practice is described very positively by schools, who believe they contribute to improvements in teachers' skills and thus learner outcomes. Subject leaders respond quickly to both local and national change. At whole-provider level, through the professional studies programme, provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and focused on trainees' needs. As a result trainees have good up-to-date knowledge, appropriate for this point in the course, of current educational issues such as special educational needs and/or disabilities. Follow through in subject sessions and by mentors is exceptional in some subjects.
18. The provider has good capacity to improve further. The successful recruitment of well-qualified and motivated trainees, high retention and employment rates, outstanding training, good attainment and equality of opportunity for trainees, all demonstrate that overall, current systems are effective and maintaining high outcomes. However, variation both in provision and outcomes between subjects remains. The self-evaluation, analysis and planning processes in place do not yet tackle these differences robustly, nor effectively share across all subjects, the outstanding practice found in some.

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

		Secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	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
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		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?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

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.

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