

University of Plymouth

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by three of 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 Plymouth and its predecessor institutions, which include Polytechnic South West and Rolle College, have a long history of initial teacher education (ITE) provision in south-west England. The university offers a range of programmes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) for those wishing to teach in primary and secondary schools. There are undergraduate and postgraduate routes for both the early years and primary age ranges. Secondary ITE consists of a one-year, pre-service training course, with 10 specialist subjects, for those wishing to teach the 11 to 18 age range. In August 2008, the Faculty of Education relocated from Exmouth to the new, purpose-built Rolle Building at the heart of the Plymouth Campus. There are some 360 primary and secondary schools in the partnership throughout Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and the London Borough of Redbridge. In recent years, the partnership has begun to establish a network of 'learning hubs' in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset.

A commentary on the provision

4. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes.
 - The recruitment of enthusiastic trainees with the skills and knowledge to become good and often outstanding teachers.
 - The detailed attention given to trainees' personal well-being and their high levels of personalised support which contributes to the good retention and improving outcomes.
 - The strong and cohesive partnership, the spirit of collaboration and the goodwill demonstrated by partnership schools and colleges.
 - The experience and expertise of university staff which contribute to the coherence of training.
 - The quality of reflection shown by trainees.

5. A particularly strong feature of the primary programme that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision is:
 - the comprehensive and well-planned documentation to support trainees' progress that is consistently applied across the partnership.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

6. The University of Plymouth offers nine four-year Bachelor of Education pathways to QTS for primary teachers: an early childhood studies route and eight primary subject specialism routes: Art and design, English, humanities, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, music, physical education and science).

The university also offers a one-year, postgraduate programme in primary education leading to either a Postgraduate Certificate in Education or a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education. The postgraduate training route provides training for early years and primary years. At the time of the inspection, there were 635 undergraduate trainees and 67 postgraduate trainees on roll.

Key strengths

7. The key strengths are:
- the sustained good progress made by trainees resulting in their outstanding attainment by the end of the course
 - the comprehensive and well-planned documentation to support trainees' progress that is consistently applied across the partnership
 - the excellent communication and positive relationships established across the partnership
 - the highly reflective, confident trainees who take every opportunity to gain experience and develop their skills and who possess an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve
 - the excellent coherence between school and university training that prepares trainees very well to get the most out of their school experiences
 - the way in which leaders strive to improve, anticipate change and implement innovation
 - the strength of the support for trainees' individual professional and personal needs and the university's commitment to equality and diversity.

Recommendation

8. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider/partnership should:
- ensure that the university's detailed knowledge of trainees, acquired at the time of recruitment, is used to exploit their strengths and utilise their prior experiences so that all trainees, but particularly those identified as higher attaining, can make the best possible progress from the start.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

9. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is outstanding. The provider judges trainees' attainment to be outstanding and inspectors agree.
10. From their various starting points, trainees make good or outstanding progress in their journey towards QTS. They display highly effective personal skills and make very good use of their school-based training. They are able to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses accurately and they form excellent working relationships with colleagues on teaching placements. In addition, they show outstanding professional skills, for example by planning lessons very thoroughly to build on pupils' developing knowledge and understanding. They show an excellent understanding of subject-based pedagogy and employ a range of well-selected resources that focus on pupils' learning. All trainees are enthusiastic, very well-motivated and committed to engaging pupils in their learning. They are equipped with a thorough understanding of the attributes needed to become successful teachers and are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of their training. Trainees benefit from working with a wide range of expert practitioners who are knowledgeable in their field and from the opportunities to experience good practice in local schools. As a result, the vast majority of trainees grow in self-confidence and make excellent progress towards their challenging targets.
11. The provider's recruitment and selection arrangements make an outstanding contribution to supporting excellent outcomes for trainees. Revised tasks at interview have helped the provider to identify candidates' individual training needs as well as those with the potential to become good and outstanding teachers. Partnership representatives endorse the university's success in training highly competent teachers by regularly appointing trainees to posts within their schools. The active involvement of partnership schools in the recruitment and selection process ensures that expectations remain high and that training is carefully tailored to meet the needs of individuals. The high level of recruitment to both primary courses has been sustained over time and confirms the faculty's popularity and growing reputation. Leaders have risen to the challenge of trying to recruit more men and attract candidates from under-represented groups. Despite these very good recruitment and selection arrangements, the university does not always fully capitalise on the highly relevant expertise and/or experiences brought by some trainees so that they can make the best possible progress from the start.
12. Highly-trained university tutors provide inspirational teaching so that trainees acquire an excellent knowledge and understanding of current national initiatives as well as the best pedagogical practices. There are increasingly innovative opportunities for trainees to gain diverse, high quality teaching experiences in other parts of the United Kingdom or on international placements, and the partnership ensures an excellent coherence between

centre-based and school-based provision. School placements are carefully planned to provide an excellent range of contrasting settings for trainees. A wide range of additional opportunities to develop their teaching skills ensures that trainees' ability to teach phonics and early reading and to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly well embedded. All trainees spoke confidently about being very well prepared to teach English as an additional language.

13. Partnership schools and trainees spoke very positively about how the documentation provided by the faculty has been very carefully designed to provide a clearly-understood framework for recording trainees' progress and development. School-based and associate tutors have a pivotal role in monitoring trainees' progress in schools. Joint observations with link tutors and sharply focused targets ensure trainees address all their identified areas for development and make maximum progress throughout each placement. A particularly strong feature is the very good attention paid to the acquisition of subject knowledge by trainees. Personal tutors are highly effective in carrying out their key role of monitoring trainees' overall progress. The professional development of school-based staff is a high priority for the university and is well supported at regular intervals, either centrally or through local 'hub' training events. Link tutors work closely with associate tutors and class teachers to provide frequent, high quality feedback to trainees that sets clear and focused developmental targets that are shared and understood by all. This provides excellent opportunities for trainees to reflect upon their teaching experiences and plan for further improvement.
14. The outstanding use of resources makes a significant contribution to high quality outcomes. Resources in the university, including information and communication technology, meet the needs and aspirations of trainees very well. Trainees speak very highly of the virtual learning environment that provides excellent opportunities for trainees to access relevant materials and documentation as well as helping those on more remote placements feel connected. A strong team of staff provides excellent professional support and trainees appreciate the additional input they gain from the wide range of visiting speakers and experts.
15. The support provided for trainees' personal well-being is excellent and extends across the partnership. This is a key factor in the year-on-year improvement in trainees' attainment and one reason why the overwhelming majority make outstanding progress. Resources are carefully allocated to ensure those individuals with challenging circumstances can succeed in their school placements. Safeguarding is rigorously enforced and monitored and trainees are confident that any issues they have are dealt with promptly, sensitively and with an attitude of care. Consequently, there is a strong climate of trust and openness at all levels where trainees feel secure in reporting any areas of concern. The wide geographical spread of the partnership allows the university to promote outstanding equality of opportunity through the rich diversity of school placements available. As a result, trainees gain extensive experience of teaching pupils of different faiths, ethnicities and ages, as well as those with

different disabilities, and this ensures that they are very well prepared to teach in a diverse society.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality **Grade: 1**

16. Strongly focused leadership at all levels, supported by accurate self-evaluation leading to sharp improvement planning, has helped to sustain high-quality outcomes and means that the provider's capacity to secure further improvements and to sustain high-quality outcomes is outstanding. The faculty enjoys an excellent reputation locally; schools strongly support the partnership and, because of the excellent communication systems, feel fully involved in decision-making. The course programmes are regularly reviewed and course leaders are visionary in pursuing improvement, analysing data and using the outcomes of their analysis creatively to find solutions to problems. They use detailed information from trainees' outcomes, benchmarking data, such as those provided in the newly qualified teacher survey, and feedback from trainees, colleagues and external examiners to identify strengths and areas for development. As a result, self-evaluation is effectively embedded across the partnership and recognised as an essential vehicle for accelerating trainees' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Retention, successful completion and employment rates are high and continue to improve.
17. The provider has introduced several measures to improve provision and maintain high quality outcomes for trainees. For example, the partnership has begun to create a system of 'hub' schools in order to create localised centres of training and support. Although still in development, this is already providing schools and trainees with more training opportunities. Comprehensive data collated on all aspects of the partnership's work are used creatively to secure improvements in provision, such as the revised school experience handbook and trainees' profile documentation that enables their progress and areas for development to be clearly evidenced. Crucial to the success of the partnership is the excellent relationship between the university and schools. The creation of a two-tier partnership agreement, allowing schools to vary their involvement year on year, has allowed the partnership to grow significantly in the past year without losing any schools.
18. The provider embraces change. It is highly effective in anticipating and responding to external initiatives at national and local levels which means trainees have a very secure understanding of national priorities. For example, the university has ensured all primary trainees receive high-quality training in the teaching of phonics and early reading.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

19. The University of Plymouth secondary programme offers Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education training routes in art and design, citizenship, drama, English, geography, mathematics, music, science with biology, science with chemistry and science with physics. At the time of the inspection there were 107 trainees. The provider currently works in partnership with around 70 secondary schools.

Key strengths

20. The key strengths are:
- the very effective recruitment and selection procedures which lead to the enrolment of trainees who are enthusiastic and well suited to the profession
 - the provider's commitment to equality and diversity
 - the high quality of reflection shown by trainees
 - the experience and expertise of the subject pathway leaders and the quality and flexibility of support they give to trainees
 - the quality and coherence of the central training
 - the commitment exhibited by all partners to the programme.

Required actions

21. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider/partnership must:
- ensure that all partners have a shared and secure understanding of the assessment profiling of trainees and know how to apply the systems to secure the best possible progress for trainees
 - ensure more rigorous monitoring of trainees' progress by all trainers.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

22. Trainees' attainment is good and there has been an increase in the proportion of trainees attaining the highest levels. There is, however, some variability in this picture across subjects. Completion rates are at least in line with national figures and the provider has been successful this year in reducing withdrawal rates in mathematics which had been higher than average. The provider meets local employment needs well and employer feedback indicates a good level of satisfaction with the quality of trainees who have completed their training at Plymouth. The provision ensures that most trainees make good progress

towards challenging targets. There are no significant differences in the outcomes of different groups of trainees.

23. Trainees reflect well on their teaching and talk enthusiastically about what they have taught and of the impact on their students. They have a broad subject knowledge which they work hard to extend if the recruitment process, or their school practice, has highlighted areas they need to develop. They develop focused, positive and professional relationships with their mentors and are keen to learn from them and from other teachers in the schools in which they are training. Not all trainees are yet able to apply behaviour management strategies consistently, nor are all using a range of strategies to engage their students more actively in their learning. Some trainees are not clear about what constitutes good quality evidence of having achieved a QTS Standard.
24. The provider is having significant success in recruiting trainees onto the programme who are well suited to the life of a teacher. The selection process is inclusive and ensures that any needs identified at interview are well met throughout the training year. Trainees' subject knowledge is carefully audited at interview and this feeds effectively into the subject knowledge portfolio which is used by trainee and trainers as a working document throughout the course. The provider has become more stringent in the requirement for candidates to have previous classroom experience. This has led to the enrolment of an increasing number of trainees who have worked as teaching assistants and who have, as a result of this work, a better knowledge of how pupils and students learn. Most importantly, the provider regularly interrogates data on recruitment and selection to see where improvements can be made.
25. The elements of the training form a coherent whole. Central subject training is strong and is highly valued by trainees. Subject pathway leaders have a high level of expertise and act as good role models for the trainees. School-based trainers show a high level of awareness of what is being addressed centrally and build on that well. Trainees receive comprehensive training in the wider aspects of the job through the central professional studies training. The training sessions on working with students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the management of behaviour have been particularly effective. The structure of the professional studies training days, however, has not fully supported cross-curricular working as the workshop session following the lecture has been overlong and lacking in guidance.
26. Trainees enjoy a high quality professional dialogue with their mentors through the weekly meetings and the review process. Trainees also benefit from the support given by other members of the department in which they are placed as well as from the opportunities to observe experienced practitioners throughout the year. Feedback is given on a very regular basis and the forms used give trainees a clear breakdown of their strengths and weaknesses. The weekly target-setting process undertaken assiduously by mentor and trainee ensures that trainees know how to meet their immediate training needs and to move on. This leads to trainees being assessed regularly on their attainment of the Standards. Trainees are all aware of the need to provide evidence to support this, and there are examples of very good quality evidence being submitted in

the professional development portfolio, but a few trainees are not sure of the best way to record their achievement.

27. The new profiling system, by which trainers assess how well trainees are performing overall, is not yet fully understood by school-based trainers or trainees. Some trainees have made use of the profiles to analyse where they want to be at the end of the year and some mentors are making use of them to set aspirational targets but there is, as yet, no shared understanding across the partnership of what constitutes an 'outstanding', 'good' or 'satisfactory' trainee.
28. Staffing is well resourced and subject pathway leaders make good use of the time they are allocated to intervene promptly when needed. Schools, as a result, feel confident that support will always be forthcoming. Trainees make good use of the virtual learning environment to share resources and to keep in touch. This is particularly important for a provider with such a wide geographical spread of schools.
29. Schools show a strong commitment to the programme and school-based trainers feel well prepared for their roles. Mentor training has a good balance of information-giving and professional development. Communication across the partnership is good and schools value the quality of the paperwork, particularly that which highlights what needs to be addressed in the two training placements. Moderation visits ensure that trainees are receiving the training they should and joint observations carried out by subject pathway leaders with mentors or class teachers lead to moderated judgements on the outcomes of individual lessons. This process is consistently applied and is helpful to both trainers and trainees. Trainees are expected to send in weekly reports of target setting and formal lesson observations to their subject pathway leaders. Because this is not always done, the progress of individual trainees towards their aspirational targets is not consistently tracked centrally, and the provider is unable to use that valuable data to identify common areas of improvement across the programme.
30. The promotion of equality and diversity is a strength of the provision. The provider ensures that a high level of personal and professional support is given to trainees. For example, strenuous efforts are made to support trainees' personal needs with placements; the recently appointed student support tutor has been instrumental in helping trainees in difficulty to remain on the programme and the provider makes very good use of university-wide counselling and learning support services. There have been no reported incidents of harassment or unlawful discrimination and trainees are confident that any issue would be thoroughly and promptly dealt with. Trainees are prepared fully for teaching in a culturally diverse society with the provider being very aware of the need for central training to provide those experiences not readily available in the training schools in the region.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

31. There has been a strong steer from senior leaders to raise attainment at the end of the programme and in 2009/10 the provider successfully increased the proportion of those attaining at the highest levels in almost all subjects. Through targeted support, the provider has also reduced the proportion of those trainees who have withdrawn. There has been less marked success, however, in moving those judged to be 'satisfactory' up to 'good'.
32. Due to unforeseen circumstances a change of programme leader became necessary at the beginning of 2011. This change was managed as well as possible by the faculty which put in place an acting programme manager with experience and a thorough knowledge of the systems. Although he has been well supported by senior leaders, the disruption has had an impact on the quality of the provision. For example, some very good preparatory work on the development of the assessment profiles to help trainers identify trainees' levels of performance was presented to professional mentors but has not yet become embedded practice across the partnership leading to some inconsistencies in their use.
33. The provider takes full account of the views of partners and other stakeholders and mentors were able to point readily to changes in provision that have arisen in response to the feedback of school-based trainers. There is a high level of dialogue between the faculty and schools; schools show considerable loyalty to the programme and the university. Trainees have a strong representation both through the staff-student consultative committee and the programme committee. Leaders make good use of a range of qualitative data in their self-evaluation but have not exploited fully the extensive quantitative data that come from the weekly mentor meetings and observation records. The provider responds appropriately to the external examiners' reports but these are not equally rigorous in their judgements. As a result of these deficiencies, the faculty's self-evaluation overestimates the quality of the secondary provision and trainees' outcomes.
34. Subject pathway leaders make good use of regional and national networks and ensure that their programmes keep pace with change and that trainees have a good understanding of a relevant range of education initiatives. They use their own professional development to inform their training and use their research and involvement with national projects to strengthen and broaden trainees' understanding of their subjects.
35. The acting programme leader and senior leaders have a clear idea of what needs to be improved. The secondary Postgraduate and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education improvement plan identifies appropriate issues and these arise out of data analysis and national, local and faculty-wide priorities. The actions planned to meet the targets in the improvement plan, however, are too broad. The acting programme leader is aware of the need for these to be

more sharply defined, more closely linked to trainees' outcomes and more precisely monitored than presently indicated.

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	2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	1	2
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	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1	2
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	2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1	2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1	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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