

# St Mary's University College

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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<b>Provider address</b>	St Mary's University College Waldegrave Road Strawberry Hill Twickenham TW1 4SX
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<b>Unique reference number</b>	70120
<b>Inspection number</b>	363156
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–18 March 2011
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Robert Lovett HMI

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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. St Mary's University College School of Education works in partnership with a range of schools to provide initial teacher education (ITE) leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the primary and secondary phases. The provider currently works with a total of 410 schools across both phases. It offers a three-year undergraduate course leading to a Bachelor of Arts (BA Honours) in primary education and a four-year BA (Honours) in primary education with an advanced specialist elective at masters level. It also offers a work-based BA (Honours) route into teaching. This replaces the BA in Education in Context (progression from foundation degree) course, which is in its final year. St Mary's also offers both full-time and part-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses in primary education. ITE, leading to QTS, through the award of a PGCE is offered in seven secondary subjects, with the separate sciences available within science. A four-year BA course leading to QTS in physical education is currently available, but is to be replaced in 2011 with a

PGCE. St Mary's is a significant contributor to the recruitment of teachers for Catholic schools.

## **A commentary on the provision**

4. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes.
  - Excellent academic and pastoral care for trainees which is reflected in high completion rates and levels of achievement which are consistently at least good.
  - Outstanding communication between the provider and schools which results in a very strong and coherent partnership with high levels of commitment and a shared vision for improvement.
  - Recruitment and selection procedures which are robust and result in high-quality trainees and newly qualified teachers who are in high demand.
  - Very good use of targets for improvement so that trainees know exactly what they need to do to meet the QTS standards (the Standards) and to improve their teaching.
  - The high levels of commitment and enthusiasm of trainees, their outstanding professional attitudes to their development and their capacity to reflect on, and analyse, their own practice.
5. The following recommendation should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees.
  - Strengthen improvement planning by ensuring that actions to be taken link more explicitly to measurable outcomes for trainees.

## **Provision in the primary phase**

### **Context**

6. Since the university college was last inspected it has worked with 454 schools. It currently works in partnership with 368 schools spread across 30 local authorities. Many of the partner schools are in the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond. There were 730 trainees enrolled on programmes across all routes at the time of inspection.

## Key strengths

7. The key strengths are:

- a strong commitment across the partnership to produce excellent, high-quality teachers in order to meet a pressing local need
- high levels of academic and pastoral care for trainees which enable almost all to make at least good progress
- excellent central training which effectively dovetails elements of professional and subject-specific training
- very reflective trainees who demonstrate a clear understanding of how pupils learn, a passion for improving as teachers and an eagerness to debate current educational practice
- high-quality selection and recruitment procedures which result in trainees who are very well suited to their chosen careers and contribute to high completion rates
- trainees' highly professional approach to their training, teaching and career development
- high-quality training and support for school-based mentors, coupled with excellent communication across the partnership.

## Recommendations

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

- formalise expectations with regard to the requirements for teaching synthetic phonics and measure the impact of recent changes in this provision on trainees' outcomes
- sharpen the use of clear and measurable targets in improvement planning and ensure these link more explicitly to outcomes for trainees.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 1**

9. Provision across the primary partnership is of high quality so that trainees' attainment is outstanding, the trainees have an excellent understanding of what it means to be a teacher and they are exceptionally well prepared for their future careers. Selection and recruitment are rigorous and make very good use of experienced colleagues from partner schools. Headteachers and deputy headteachers are well prepared for their duties as interviewers and appreciate the opportunity to play an active role in the partnership and have an impact on the quality of trainees selected. The pre-course expectations are high and consistent. All applicants are expected to have gained significant school experience before interview and there are rigorous written tests in English and mathematics.

10. Because of the esteem in which trainees are held, employment rates for newly qualified teachers are high, and former St Mary's trainees are in great demand. St Mary's is notably successful in meeting its recruitment targets. The recruitment of under-represented groups is generally in line with, or above, national averages. Some recent initiatives, such as targeting recruitment in particular schools and colleges, have been very successful in increasing both cultural diversity and the proportion of male trainees. Deficits in knowledge or experience identified at the interview stage may result in trainees being given additional pre-course tasks and form the basis for their first meeting with their tutors and their early targets.
11. The setting of targets for trainees is a significant strength of the training. These targets reflect the need to garner evidence of trainees' progress towards the Standards and to improve practice both as teachers and as learners. The ongoing targets, which refer to small improvements which might be made in day-to-day classroom practice, are particularly effective. Trainees receive relevant and helpful feedback on all aspects of their professional development and the lesson feedback pro-forma links both strengths and areas for improvement, explicitly and helpfully, to the Standards.
12. Trainees plan lessons very well, taking care to meet the needs of a range of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and more able pupils, and have an excellent grounding in promoting high levels of inclusion. Meeting the needs of all learners is a central theme of professional studies and is very effectively woven into subject-based lectures and workshops. Centre- and school-based training is of high quality and prepares trainees well for the rigours of the classroom and for working with colleagues in schools. Expectations are high and consistent. Tutors, lecturers and colleagues from schools model best practice very effectively. As one trainee said, 'They practise what they preach.'
13. St Mary's makes increasingly good use of school-based expertise, for example by using skilled teachers as visiting lecturers. Partnership teachers are also used to help develop best practice in the teaching of synthetic phonics. Although, by the time they leave, trainees say they are confident in teaching phonics across a range of year groups, the expectation that they should be observed teaching phonics is not sufficiently formal and explicit in every school placement. Inspectors observed some high-quality teaching of letters and sounds and early reading. The university college plans to make greater use of leading literacy schools through the use of interactive technology, but the potential of this partnership resource is currently underdeveloped.
14. Trainees are very well prepared to manage pupils' behaviour in classrooms and to promote positive attitudes to learning. They know that creating an exciting and stimulating learning environment and their good organisational skills are significant contributors to good behaviour. In practical subjects such as science and art trainees are shown how to arrange resources in such a way as to minimise possible problems and maximise ease of access.

15. The personalisation of academic and pastoral support for trainees ensures that their learning needs are very well met and trainees speak highly of the assistance they receive, especially when they encounter difficulties. Thanks to school experience placements in a range of schools, trainees are very well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society. They have a good understanding of issues such as the development of language skills for pupils new to English, the place of phonics teaching within this, and what represents the very best of inclusive practice.
16. The strength, commitment and coherence of the partnership are all outstanding. Headteachers say that communications are excellent and that St Mary's trainees are exceptionally well prepared for their placements and exemplify high professional standards of dress and conduct. Trainees are highly reflective practitioners, eager to improve their own teaching and discuss current practice in education. In schools, they seek out and arrange the experiences they need to meet the Standards and develop good team skills. Training for school and class mentors is of high quality, with some headteachers ensuring all teachers have the opportunity to be class mentors because of the excellent professional development it affords. Schools say that any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. As one said, 'It's on the rare occasions that things go wrong that the quality of the partnership really shines through.' Whole-school focus days when groups of trainees teach across all classes in a school, such as the excellent science day during the inspection, greatly enhance trainees' experience and strengthen the partnership.
17. The high quality of St Mary's staff contributes significantly to trainees' outstanding attainment. Trainees value the good range of resources, such as those for numeracy and the 'St Mary's chest of Roman artefacts', available for them to use on school placements. Literacy resources, including printed materials, are of equally high quality and readily available. The virtual learning environment gives trainees access to timetables, lecture notes and research materials and enables them to keep in touch with each other and with trainers. Trainees keep comprehensive, manageable and very well organised folders of evidence. Some newly qualified teachers, and those further on in their careers, continue to refer to the high-quality documentation from their years as trainees at St Mary's. While resources are mostly used very well, the potential of the leading literacy schools is underdeveloped. Those trainees following a work-based route value the flexibility this course gives them. The provider is very responsive to their changing needs and recognises the range of additional expertise in areas such as the teaching of phonics and early reading they may already possess.
18. All trainees are adamant that their horizons are being broadened by being at St Mary's and they are being 'educated' to teach rather than being 'trained'.

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

**Grade: 1**

19. The quality and impact of partnership working are excellent. The commitment to a shared set of values and to continuous improvement is very strong and is clearly articulated in the partnership agreement. Partnership headteachers see St Mary's as a valuable partner in recruiting high-quality teachers to meet a strong and growing local need. This is reflected in the high number of former trainees employed in local schools. Schools also see St Mary's as a valuable resource and accessible source of expertise and value the excellent professional development opportunities the partnership affords. The existing clusters of schools and the developing local authority based cross-phase clusters are a good response to the emerging needs of local schools.
20. The university college's self-evaluation is highly effective in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, has brought about significant improvements in the outcomes for trainees and accords in most respects with the inspection judgements. Staff across the partnership are involved in evaluating how well it is doing, schools' contribution to improvement planning is highly valued. As a result of the quality and extent of its self-evaluation, the provider has been able to identify appropriate priorities for the future. Improvement planning is clear and detailed and has good links to raising attainment and improving outcomes for trainees. Outcome data are very carefully collated and analysed in order to identify trends and plans for improvement. The attainment of groups of trainees is carefully tracked and useful long- and short-term targets are set. However, some success criteria describe changes in provision rather than improvements in trainees' outcomes and are not expressed in a measurable way.
21. The partnership keeps very well abreast of educational priorities such as training in the teaching of phonics and early reading and behaviour management. The emerging national focus on school leadership is reflected in the provider's long-term longitudinal study of trainees' career paths and the development of their leadership skills over time.
22. External examiners' reports comment on the highly effective and accurate systems for quality assurance and the accuracy of the provider's assessments of trainees. Regular visits to schools by experienced tutors involve careful scrutiny of trainees' planning, their evidence of progress against the Standards and how well they are doing against their targets. There are frequent joint lesson observations with school-based trainers, interviews with trainees and discussions with class mentors. School placements are carefully planned to ensure they match trainees' needs very well and provide them with a suitable balance of schools.
23. Recent changes to the leadership team have enhanced already good partnership arrangements and further improved communication. Schools particularly value the efforts St Mary's has made to rationalise documentation and reduce the burden of administration while at the same time enhancing its impact through significantly raising trainee attainment over time. The cross-partnership 'paperwork reduction committee' has been particularly effective!



24. St Mary's University College is an ambitious and forward looking provider of primary initial teacher education. Over time newly qualified teachers from St Mary's have consistently rated the quality of their training significantly more highly than newly qualified teachers nationally. The provider is committed to increasing the proportion of trainees judged outstanding across all routes into teaching. St Mary's record of improvement, its committed leadership and the significant strength of partnership working demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve.

## Provision in the secondary phase

### Context

25. The university college offers postgraduate secondary courses in applied information and communication technology (ICT), geography, health and social care, mathematics, modern languages, religious education and science. This is the final year of a four-year BA in physical education. There were 239 trainees enrolled on programmes at the time of inspection.

### Key strengths

26. The key strengths are:
- the commitment and enthusiasm of trainees, and their sharp focus on pupils' learning that meet the needs of local schools particularly well
  - the high quality of discussion and reflection among trainees which, coupled with highly effective target setting, facilitates their rapid progress
  - centre-based trainers' excellent knowledge of schools in the partnership which results in very well planned placements that enhance training
  - the high level of individual support which ensures that trainees' progression through the course is outstanding
  - the excellent support provided for school-based tutors and mentors and the exceptional quality of communication within the partnership
  - the very prominent role of school-based tutors and mentors in assessment leading to consistency in judgements about trainees and clarity in target setting
  - the continuous improvement that is driven by highly effective leadership.

### Recommendations

27. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- ensure that improvement planning in subjects is consistently sharp.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 1**

28. The secondary training at St Mary's is held in high regard in the local area. As a result, St Mary's trainees are much sought after both for training placements and for employment. The provider is rightly proud that many recent trainees are now in leadership roles in partnership schools. Relationships with local schools are exceptionally strong. Former trainees spoke passionately about the high quality of both school- and university-based training and surveys of newly qualified teachers show that their satisfaction with all aspects of their training is significantly and consistently above the national average.
29. The high-quality recruitment procedures, together with rigorous entry qualifications, make a very positive contribution to the attainment of trainees which is outstanding. In physical education the number of applications far exceeds the places available and so it is possible for the provider to be highly selective. In other subjects, there is far less competition for places and very extensive use is made of a range of enhancement and top-up courses, particularly, but not exclusively, in mathematics and science. In order to meet the staffing demands of local schools, the provider recruits trainees, especially to shortage subjects, who may not necessarily have conventional qualifications. In such instances, various effective approaches are adopted to enhance trainees' subject knowledge before trainees start the course. Prior to interview, trainees are required to spend time in schools and reflection on this experience is used as a basis for interview. The personalisation of training begins from the moment of initial enquiry.
30. The high completion and employment rates indicate that the trainees recruited are highly suitable for the course with the potential to become good or better teachers. Some 95% of PGCE trainees become teachers, well above sector and regional averages, and in physical education only one of those completing in the last four years is not teaching. There is an established track record of subjects recruiting to target.
31. Trainees' initial strengths and weaknesses are assessed well at selection and subject knowledge audits are completed that are regularly revisited to monitor progress. Schools are very effectively involved in selection. This is encouraged through making participation in interviewing part of mentoring. Recently, there has been an increase in recruitment from under-represented groups and an increase in the proportion of these groups achieving QTS.
32. The quality of training across the partnership is consistently high. The review and monitoring of trainees' performance that track their progress towards the Standards are rigorous and consistent. School-based training is outstanding. Consistently good quality mentoring across the partnership and trainees' growing presence in the classroom and good classroom management demonstrate its impact. Central training has a particularly impressive emphasis on equality, inclusion and diversity. A conference in January included presentations from practitioners in special schools as well as subject-specific sessions on meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented or speak English as an additional language. Trainees have also benefited from parallel school-based

sessions on these topics and all have opportunities in their classes to put their training into practice.

33. Trainees know how to apply their subject knowledge and understand the associated pedagogy. They plan lessons in detail and incorporate a range of interesting activities to help maintain good pace and good levels of engagement. Trainees also understand the implications of their subject across the curriculum through the 'cross-curricular café'.
34. In the rare instances when there is a problem with or for a trainee during a school placement, the channels of communication with centre-based tutors are very effective, resulting in a swift response and a rapidly-arranged visit to the school. Cause for concern forms are an effective tool to identify issues quickly before they escalate, so that action can be taken promptly and support put in place.
35. Resources are deployed very well. In addition to the regular tutor visits, which double as a training opportunity for the mentor, further visits are arranged if trainees wish to have extra guidance on aspects of their teaching. Some trainees have additional experiences arranged so that they can enhance their knowledge and expertise, for example in teaching Italian or high-ability boys. All trainees have opportunities to develop their ICT skills for teaching and learning through a centre-based session supported by St Mary's ICT technicians and a subject group visit to a partnership school to spend the day exploring how ICT is used there to support learning. Centre-based training regularly utilises schools with particular expertise and brings in school staff to the university college. The library facilities and other resources that are available in the St Mary's education building are excellent.
36. The partnership is strong and cohesive with a clear commitment to achieving the best outcomes for all trainees. School-based professional tutors and university subject tutors take on a quality assurance role which has secured the accuracy of the evaluation of trainees' performance. Inspectors found a remarkable and unusual degree of consistency across their sixteen school visits. School-based trainers, mentors and university tutors also meet regularly to discuss trainees' progress and share good practice. The schools' commitment to St Mary's is exemplified by the number of schools offering placements and in the number of placements they offer.

## **The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality**

**Grade: 1**

37. The provider's analysis of provision and its impact is detailed and evaluative. There exists across the partnership a remarkable consistency of approach, described by one inspector as 'a house style'. Tutors have worked very hard to establish this and to ensure that it is securely embedded and sustained.

38. Leaders and managers work extremely effectively as a coherent team to review provision and seek further improvement. For example, an analysis of newly qualified teachers' satisfaction survey data which identified training for the teaching of pupils who speak English as an additional language as strong, but less so than other provision.
39. External examiners' reports are used well to identify weaknesses and initiate change. In the partnership schools visited the capacity of leadership and management to effect change and support trainees was never less than good, and in many cases was outstanding. Support for mentoring is excellent. Meetings are well attended and newly-appointed mentors who have not yet attended meetings are supported effectively by the subject tutors who visit them individually. The provider is a member of the South West London Teacher Education Consortium and the consortium's documentation, which is shared by a number of providers, is rigorous, clear and helpful; expectations are well understood. Robust action is taken when placements are not working and on occasion schools are deselected.
40. University college trainers are fully involved in initiatives and groups at both regional and national levels, and make contributions to subject association conferences and regional networks. However, improvement planning with schools is a particular strength and some trainers are school governors or School Improvement Partners, enabling them to maintain close contact with emerging national initiatives. The school support programme is particularly innovative.
41. In addition to the strong focus in the training on working with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, other national priorities, such as behaviour management and literacy, are given a very high profile. For example, a day on training about literacy across the curriculum early on in the course is supplemented later by a focus on using synthetic phonics at Key Stage 3. This involves specialists from the primary team and is indicative of the close working between primary and secondary specialists.
42. The partnership is continually evolving and improving, informed by accurate, overall self-evaluation and careful planning and review. However, the provider has rightly recognised that at subject level, development planning is not yet rigorous enough because success criteria are not closely enough related to the outcomes for trainees. The provider's track record of year-on-year improvements provides clear evidence of St Mary's outstanding capacity for sustaining high quality outcomes in its secondary provision.

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

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

### Overall effectiveness

		Primary	Secondary
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
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?	2	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
<b>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?</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
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

<sup>1</sup> 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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