

University of Sunderland

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Unique reference number

70070

Inspection number

365954

Inspection dates

16–20 May 2011

Lead inspector

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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 Sunderland is a well-established provider of initial teacher education (ITE). In partnership with its partner schools and colleges it provides a range of primary and secondary courses leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) and a variety of qualifications for those teaching, or planning to teach, in the further education (FE) sector.
4. All trainees studying for QTS are assessed against the Standards as laid out by the Teacher Development Agency (referred to throughout the report as the Standards). The university provides training in the 5 to 11 age range within its primary courses and the 11 to 18 or 14 to 19 age ranges in its secondary courses.
5. The university is a provider for the graduate-teacher programme through employment-based routes. The trainees following this route access modules within primary and secondary provision. Primary trainees follow a specific

primary module. Masters level modules are available for primary and secondary trainees. The graduate-teacher programme was subject to a separate inspection in June 2010.

6. A large proportion of trainees on the university courses are from Sunderland and its immediate area. The area is high in terms of its socio-economic deprivation; unemployment rates are high in the region and the population is predominantly White British. The education department at the university attracts over a third of its students from low participation neighbourhoods.
7. In 2007, in collaboration with other higher education institutions in the region, the university formed a group (MERIT) to enhance minority ethnic recruitment through the promotion of teacher education within the black minority ethnic community. A proportion of its funding has been used to support the appointment of an outreach worker. This appointee has links with different minority ethnic communities across the North East region.

A commentary on the provision

8. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes:
 - strong and rapid communication between the university and its partners in schools and colleges, ensuring all in the partnerships know their roles and responsibilities
 - good provision for equality and diversity, particularly in combating stereotyping, prejudice, racism and homophobia, on the primary and secondary courses and outstanding provision on the FE courses
 - good personal support for trainees on all courses and strong academic support on secondary and FE programmes
 - reflective and self-critical trainees on the secondary and FE courses with a drive to succeed and improve
 - trainees' good understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues on both primary and secondary courses.

9. There are particularly strong features in some programmes that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision:
 - the high levels of coherence between centre- and school-based training on the secondary courses could be applied to the primary courses
 - the good use of the virtual learning environment for Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and undergraduate trainees could be applied and used with trainees on the FE courses
 - the innovative 'tackling prejudice together' being developed within the FE provision could be used on primary and secondary courses.

10. The following recommendations should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees:
 - improve the accuracy, quality and strategic use of data to identify trends and patterns in outcomes for trainees over time
 - improve the proportion of undergraduate trainees attaining QTS and being employed in schools and improving the completion rates on the in-service FE programmes

Provision in the primary phase

Context

11. The primary provision consists of a four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a one-year PGCE course. Trainees who choose to specialise in the teaching of modern foreign languages (French or Spanish) have opportunities to study abroad. At the time of the inspection, there were 389 trainees on the BA course and 26 trainees on the PGCE course, half of whom took the enhancement in primary French. In 2010/2011 the university worked in partnership with approximately 192 schools in 12 different local authorities.

Key strengths

12. The key strengths are:
 - the training in equality and diversity which enables trainees to have a very good understanding of relevant legislation, of how to teach pupils from different backgrounds and of how to tackle aspects such as stereotyping, racism and homophobia
 - trainees' good understanding of how to teach pupils who are disabled and those who are identified as having special educational needs
 - tutors' good knowledge of schools in the partnership which enables them to identify and make effective use of staff and schools with specialist skills
 - the good pastoral support provided for trainees through good communication with tutors and through effective use of resources such as the virtual learning environment.

Required actions

13. In order to improve outcomes for trainees, the university must:
 - increase the rates of retention and succession, particularly on the undergraduate course, to ensure the proportion of trainees starting the course and then attaining QTS is closer to the national average
 - improve the structure and coherence of the undergraduate course so that trainees retain their knowledge by applying key teaching skills more frequently with pupils.

Recommendations

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

- improve the quality, precision and effectiveness of targets to enable trainees to know precisely what they must do to improve their teaching and pupils' learning
 - improve trainees' retention and application of knowledge and understanding about how to teach reading well
 - ensure trainees have consistently good centre- and school-based training to enable a greater proportion make good progress, including those on placement abroad
 - ensure tutors interviewing candidates and mentoring trainees when on placement in France speak and understand French.
15. In order to increase the university's capacity to improve and the quality of the training, the partnership should:
- ensure all leaders, managers and partners collect, collate and make strategic use of accurate and useful data to provide a detailed overview about outcomes for groups of trainees and outcomes against individual and group Standards.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

16. Over the last three years attainment has been good although there are differences for groups of trainees. Trainees attain better on the generic PGCE than on the PGCE with enhancement in French, and trainees' attainment is higher on the PGCE than on the undergraduate course. Trainees' evaluations of the quality of their training are far stronger on the PGCE than on the undergraduate course. All groups of trainees had a good working knowledge of how to teach pupils of different backgrounds. They also had a good understanding of how to tackle different diversity issues such as prejudice, stereotyping and how to deal with homophobia and racism. For example, they explained to pupils that homophobic language is wrong and that they should value differences in people and in same-sex families. The university has very good systems, policies and procedures to ensure all forms of harassment are minimised. For example, it records, monitors and evaluates any examples of harassment against each of the seven protected characteristics identified in the Equality Acts: age, faith, sexuality, ethnicity, gender, disability and gender re-assignment. Trainees, as a result of the strong focus by the university, have a good understanding of safeguarding and child protection.
17. Most trainees taught satisfactory lessons; they had good relationships with pupils, they planned and taught well the skills of speaking and listening, and showed good levels of flexibility within lessons. These features were confirmed by employers who agreed that trainees were able to adapt their approaches for different learners in their classrooms and for different eventualities arising in

school. The more experienced, more committed and more able trainees made better progress and went out of their way to acquire new knowledge and to consolidate their training. They had a good understanding of how to assess pupils and used this to plan and teach lessons. They used a range of methods successfully to maintain good behaviour. For example, they made good use of their voice and non-verbal cues, positive praise and reinforcement, and of the school's behaviour policy. Less strong trainees made only satisfactory progress and taught lessons that were barely satisfactory. A few lessons were inadequate. Common characteristics were a lack of knowledge about how to teach reading and phonics (letters and sounds) well, a focus in lessons on completing tasks rather than extending pupils' learning, talking too much and pupils being not involved enough, and a lack of pace in learning. Less strong trainees also had more difficulty in maintaining good behaviour throughout the lesson, resorting, for example, to shouting and dealing poorly with pupils who reported the misbehaviour of others. These trainees tended to stay with one group throughout lessons and allowed the rest of the class to become off-task.

18. Inspectors identified a large proportion of trainees without the necessary knowledge of key terminology or of how to teach phonics and reading. Trainees also had little recall of their training in key aspects such as the simple view of reading, different phonic programmes or key texts and publications. Some trainees in lessons, for example, particularly in Key Stage 2, miss opportunities to consolidate and extend pupils' understanding of how to segment and blend, and how to sound out phonemes (the sounds letters make). Trainees' lack of recall is in part due to the structure and content of the course and also to a lack of frequent opportunities to apply their teaching skills and knowledge with pupils. For example, a few trainees had not taught phonics because some teachers would not allow them to do so when they were on placement, and for some trainees it has been over two years since they learnt about or taught phonics.
19. Systems to recruit, select and retain trainees have been inadequate. This resulted, for some years, in very high proportions of trainees withdrawing from the course. Trainees often withdrew because they decided part-way through their training that teaching was not for them. In the 2010 exit survey, over 40% of trainees making it to the end of the course and attaining QTS were not in employment and were not looking for a job. Newly qualified teachers for the last two years cited a lack of readiness for their future careers, lack of preparation for their continuing development and inadequate guidance on completing their induction year. Employment data indicate only around two thirds of trainees are in teaching. Trainees told inspectors that they had to be resilient to stay till the end of the course and that the commitment of some of their colleagues was lacking. Systems to select and recruit trainees have been strengthened and are now satisfactory although the proportion of interviews in which partnership schools are involved is relatively low. Not all trainees accepted onto the PGCE course with an enhancement in French are interviewed by someone fluent in French.
20. The university recruits trainees with a relatively high academic background. A majority of trainees make good progress and attain well by the end of the

course but too many only make satisfactory progress. Their achievement is hampered by a number of factors. The first is the inconsistency in the quality of targets and also the frequency of change. Some targets agreed with well-trained and able mentors are clear, sharply written and developmental, providing a clear framework which the trainee can use to make swifter progress and attain higher. Too many mentors, however, set targets which repeat the wording of the Standards or are imprecise, such as, 'talk to the assessment coordinator'. Too many mentors set the same target for a number of weeks, reflecting the trainee's lack of progress. The university sends out mentors to observe and talk with PGCE enhancement trainees when they are in placements abroad. The tutors, however, are not always fluent in French, which hinders communication between them and the French class teachers. The second factor affecting trainees' progress is the structure of the BA course. There are large gaps between placements so trainees lose confidence, forget vital knowledge and skills and lose momentum in their learning. There are not enough opportunities between placements to practice and apply their knowledge. The modular nature of the programme and the amount of optional electives mean sessions do not always build on trainees' prior knowledge or keep trainees' knowledge updated. This is one reason, for example, why trainees have a lack of secure knowledge about the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 3, and why they forget key terminology related to the teaching of early reading.

21. Pastoral support for trainees is good. There are good systems and procedures in place to identify and respond to trainees' needs. The university consults trainees frequently to find out their pastoral and academic needs. Resources have been used effectively to support, guide and help trainees, depending on their level of needs. Other resources are used well, such as the virtual learning environment to keep trainees in touch with lectures and communication systems to keep them in touch with tutors and other trainees. Extra library and e-books were bought following requests from trainees. Additional resources are deployed effectively when a trainee is at risk of failing. Despite this, succession and completion rates are low and there has been only a limited impact on outcomes for trainees. Despite money and time given to the MERIT project, the proportion of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds is relatively low. Despite extra tutors' time given to weaker trainees, there is no overall trend of improvement in attainment or progress. The gaps in attainment still exist between different groups of trainees and in how well different Standards are met. Mentors, trainees and headteachers confirm that communication within the partnership is strong and rapid. Tutors respond quickly and are highly flexible and approachable, always willing to give up their time to help. Trainees on placement in England know in good time which schools they are going to and are able to prepare for their teaching. Resources are used to attract mentors to come to pre-placement meetings with trainees and university staff. The turnout from schools, however, is low. There is a good mix of schools in the partnership and university staff have identified advanced skills teachers, specialist teachers and leading literacy schools to contribute to the training. Trainees, however, confirm inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring in placement schools and in centre-based training. Coherence between school-

and centre-based training is not as strong as it could be which hampers trainees' progress.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

22. The primary courses and some outcomes for trainees are improving. The national survey of newly qualified teachers for the last two years indicated very low approval ratings in a number of aspects, including the teaching of phonics and reading. The university amended the training to provide extra training and amended assessment systems to find out how well trainees teach different aspects of reading. As a result trainees' subject knowledge has improved since a year ago.
23. The university evaluates the course by gathering and referring to a wide range of information from tutors, mentors in school and external examiners, and from trainees and specialists from outside agencies such as the Teacher Development Agency. University tutors also identify strengths and weaknesses in the course by analysing observations of trainees' teaching, and by analysing their records of professional development. The data generated from the self-evaluation are not robust, thorough, detailed or reliable enough for the university to get an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of trainees' outcomes. Similarly, the data generated does not give tutors a picture of the achievement, attainment or progress of groups of trainees or of groups of QTS Standards. This means leaders and managers do not have a detailed enough understanding of outcomes. This in part is why the university's self-evaluation is significantly over-generous. There has been some recent improvement. Leaders and managers identified a problem with the completion rates of trainees. These figures were analysed and tracked back to the process of selection and interview, and data were generated to provide a strategic overview over time. Actions were taken to strengthen the application and selection process and, as a result, the number of trainees withdrawing from the course in the current Year 1 and Year 2 of the undergraduate programme has reduced significantly.
24. Newly qualified trainees' approval rating of their preparedness to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their teaching has improved over the last three years. Similarly their ratings have improved for the way the university has prepared them to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and how to establish and maintain a good standard of behaviour in lessons. This indicates a track record of making some improvements to outcomes for trainees over the last five years.

25. Improvement plans are of good quality because they are entirely focused on outcomes for trainees and identify clear ways in which the actions will be evaluated and monitored. The criteria for evaluating the impact of actions are not as precise as they could be to enable leaders and managers to measure their success. The improvement plans take account of national priorities such as the teaching of phonics and the teaching of pupils who are disabled and those who are identified as having special educational needs. As a consequence of the focus on these aspects and effective training, all groups of trainees had a good understanding of the green paper '*Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability - a consultation*' and of how to teach and cater for pupils who are disabled. Trainees knew, for example, how to make reasonable adjustments so disabled pupils could access the curriculum and visits. They were confident and able in working with pupils identified as having special educational needs by ensuring the activities were matched to pupils' abilities and by asking questions which made them engage with the tasks. Similarly, the university has improved its training to enable trainees to have a good understanding of the implications and impact of the Equality Acts. The university is outward looking and has some innovative practice, such as a transition project for a small number of trainees working with students in an academy.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

26. The university runs two- and three-year undergraduate courses, a one-year PGCE course and subject knowledge enhancement programmes lasting six months or a year. All undergraduate trainees come together in the final year of their individual programmes to form the secondary professional year. Trainees specialise in one of eight subject areas. A number of secondary programmes are not widely offered by other local training providers, notably programmes in business education, design and technology, ICT and, more recently, diplomas. The university also offers courses in engineering, English, geography, mathematics and science. The university works with 237 schools in the secondary partnership. At the time of the inspection, 179 trainees were studying on the undergraduate courses and 220 on the postgraduate courses.

Key strengths

27. The key strengths are:
- trainees' consistently reflective practice that ensures a focus on professional development
 - the academic and personal support provided to trainees by course tutors and school liaison tutors that contributes to their progress
 - the commitment of trainers in the partnership schools to the all-round development of the trainees
 - strong communication and positive relationships between the university and its partnership schools which ensure all are aware of their roles and responsibilities
 - high levels of coherence in training between the schools and the university, and between the generic and subject training, that contribute to trainees' progress
 - the structure of the final year that is common to all courses and ensures access to high quality training for all trainees
 - the good quality of the 'trainee performance profile' document and its contribution to ensuring that assessment is secure and that trainees and their trainers have high expectations of their final achievement.

Recommendations

28. In order to develop strategic planning and to sustain improvement in trainee outcomes:
- analyse available data systematically and rigorously and ensure its use is embedded in practice.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

29. Trainees' attainment is outstanding. The overwhelming majority of trainees make at least good progress and some make outstanding progress from their starting points. Employment rates are high. Completion rates are higher for those on postgraduate courses than for those on undergraduate courses but there has been a significant improvement in undergraduate completion rates recently following the provider's targeted improvement actions.
30. As a result of the outstanding quality of training, trainees develop many strong aspects of practice, including a good understanding of safeguarding. They develop positive relationships with learners and successfully use a range of teaching and learning strategies to meet their varying learning needs. Trainees' very strong subject knowledge, sound understanding of subject pedagogy and confident use of ICT help them to make learning relevant and topical. Trainees are not afraid to take risks when planning and delivering lessons. Training successfully encourages trainees to be highly reflective, although this reflection is focused more on teaching than on learning. Trainees' ability to be self-critical enhances their practice and ensures they consistently demonstrate high quality professional values. Trainees understand that there are some areas in which their skills could be further improved. They manage learners' behaviour well but a few are not confident in using a full range of behaviour management strategies. While trainees support learners' individual needs well there is some variability in their ability to plan this support through a range of techniques. For example, although trainees use open and closed questions, they do not consistently target their questions to particular learners and then maximise opportunities to probe their knowledge and understanding and extend them further.
31. Recruitment and selection procedures are successful. Strong attention is paid to individual needs from the point at which potential applicants first make contact with the university, through to arrangements for interviews and consideration of what pre-course activities would most benefit those recruited. The university uses a range of strategies to encourage potential trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds to apply for its courses. Recruitment for this group is often above regional, though not national, levels. Outcomes for different groups of trainees are aptly analysed to inform recruitment and selection procedures; individual and group strengths and weaknesses are used well to inform training. However, there remains too much inconsistency in practice across subjects in terms of ensuring a strong emphasis on school experience and consideration of educational issues as part of recruitment to undergraduate courses.
32. The university is highly committed to widening participation and to meeting local needs. Career changers, those with non-standard qualifications and those who need to follow access courses before application are all encouraged and very well supported both academically and pastorally throughout their courses. Well-judged feedback is provided to unsuccessful candidates to help them in the future. For example, one trainee came through an access route to complete

- a degree, was rejected on first application and was advised to get more school experience and a GCSE in mathematics. Having worked as a learning support assistant for a year and gained the GCSE the trainee is now progressing very well.
33. All aspects of training are highly coherent. There is close integration between subject and professional studies and between school and central provision. Coherence is particularly strong during the final year, which is common to all courses and helps to ensure that almost all trainees make at least good progress. Trainers and trainees alike benefit from the approach. However, there is some variability in opportunities and expectations for undergraduate trainees to get involved with schools prior to the final year. The 'trainee performance profile', a document designed to enable trainees and trainers to monitor and assess trainees' performance during the course, is used very successfully. Its clarity and the inherent high expectations of trainees ensure that school-based trainers continually challenge trainees to attain even higher. In turn, trainees use the document very well to reflect on their current strengths and weaknesses and to consider what actions might lead to improvement. The expectation is for them to become at least a good teacher. Assessment systems are rigorous, well understood and accurate.
34. Subject tutors are skilled practitioners and make excellent contributions to training that help to develop trainees' strong subject knowledge and awareness of related teaching skills. They are highly informed of best practice in their subjects. The frequent and well-focused communication between schools and tutors results in positive relationships. It is enhanced through the work of school liaison tutors and the good use made of the virtual learning environment. Such strong communication facilitates trainers in meeting trainees' individual needs very well and helps to ensure that all receive their entitlement. Mentoring is at least good across the partnership. Where practice is occasionally weaker it is as a result of too little focus on learning which is then replicated in trainees' reflections. Nevertheless, written feedback following lesson observations and target-setting is of high quality with subject tutors modelling best practice. School-based trainers understand their roles and responsibilities fully and are highly committed to ensuring the best for their trainees.
35. Close attention is paid to ensuring that placements are contrasting, especially in relation to the academic attainment of learners and their socio-economic backgrounds. This supports trainees' understanding of diversity issues well. Placements ensure that trainees understand their responsibilities to support learners with their literacy and special educational needs appropriately. Central training is thorough to prepare trainees to teach in a culturally diverse society and to support those who speak English as an additional language. Tasks and assignments make a significant contribution in these respects. When trainees have limited experience of cultural diversity in their placements, they understand their limitations. Through good guidance and support from placement schools, trainees fully understand that it is their responsibility to get to grips with school policies designed to promote equality and diversity and to eliminate discrimination and harassment. Trainees' confident awareness of

gender issues means they use this well to consider groupings of learners in their classrooms. They are not yet sufficiently proactive in promoting equality and diversity within their subject teaching through the use of specific resources and curriculum choices. Even so, they are very well prepared for employment and very confidently prepared for interviews.

36. Resourcing decisions, carefully considered by leaders and managers, enhance training and are carefully monitored for their impact on trainees' outcomes. Practising professionals from across the partnership bring additional expertise to central and school-based training. Conferences and specific initiatives help address key local and national priorities. Resources are often successfully targeted to reduce differences in outcomes for particular groups of trainees and to meet individual needs, such as those for trainees with a declared disability.
37. The consistency of quality across the partnership is very high. Partnership development meetings that include central trainers, school-based generic tutors and subject mentors enable high levels of engagement, contribute effectively to consistency and communicate key priorities and high expectations across the partnership. There is a very high level of commitment from all staff. This is exemplified in the number of mentors who are former Sunderland trainees, who are absolutely committed to the partnership and understand and embrace its culture and expectations. Training and assessment arrangements are understood by all. There is individual variation between subjects but a common structure of documentation and procedure supports the programme successfully and contributes to consistency in school practice. Thus, consistency and flexibility through shared understanding contribute to high quality provision across the partnership.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 1

38. The provider has excellent capacity for further improvement. When evaluating the impact of provision on outcomes for trainees, leaders and managers consider the views of all trainers and trainees regularly and systematically. Careful emphasis is also given to the views of former trainees, partnership headteachers and local authorities. They are overwhelmingly positive about the strengths of the partnership. This evaluative information, including quantitative and qualitative data, is reviewed and discussed at a range of committees and steering groups to ensure that the partnership is aware of its strengths and areas for development. This leads to effective action planning that is successfully improving outcomes for trainees.
39. Feedback about the quality of provision is widely sought. Partnership meetings enable the provider to gain good evaluation of provision from trainers and to disseminate key priorities to trainers. Schools value the debate. The school visits by tutors contribute to feedback. Benchmarking is well used through links

with other providers and comparisons with national data sets. Information from such sources is carefully balanced with information gained from internal sources of evaluation by trainees and trainers to help achieve a more accurate picture. Trainees' progress is closely tracked over time, in relation to different groups of trainees and different groups of Standards. This informs short, medium and long term planning and the allocation of resources and enables the partnership to be both reactive and proactive. At subject level, excellent review of provision brings about continual improvement in order to meet better the needs of trainees over time.

40. Action planning has improved since the last inspection. Plans are well formulated and their relative quality evaluated by senior leaders, with points for improvement made. The foci are on priorities identified through self-evaluation and success criteria rooted in improving outcomes for trainees, although these are not consistently expressed as measurable outcomes. Priorities are communicated very well across the partnership so that all trainers understand the role they play in achieving them and central staff have clear monitoring responsibilities that feed into evaluation. Strong account is taken of trainees' and partnership' views in considering the success of action plans. Action planning is well informed by the review process and data are increasingly well used to evaluate the success of actions. Because action planning covers short, medium and long term periods and within-year reviews ensure that actions remain on target, there is maximum impact for current as well as future trainees. Planning is very well supported by the commitment of all the staff. Although the provider uses an increasingly wide range of data to review provision and outcomes, one weaker aspect of action planning is that data are not systematically and rigorously analysed to ensure their use is embedded in practice, to inform strategic planning and to ensure that the promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding.
41. The provider is not complacent, continually seeking to enhance its provision for the benefit of trainees. Robust quality-assurance processes, which are contributing to improving the quality of training, are in place. The work of school liaison tutors contributes very well to this and resources allocated to the frequent school visits by liaison and subject tutors are paying dividends. They form a pathway to further improving the provision. The equality and diversity group reviews developments. It focuses specifically on outcomes for trainees to ensure that any gaps between groups are being narrowed. The provider's own data indicate that an increasing proportion of trainees feel well prepared in relation to inclusion issues (an aspect that had been shown to be weaker in surveys of newly qualified teachers from the partnership). Drop-out rates for undergraduate trainees have noticeably declined this year following targeted actions.
42. The provider meets local needs outstandingly well. This is achieved through joint initiatives with local schools, which benefit trainees, school trainers and learners in the region. The provider has responded well to requests from local schools and colleges, for example setting up a project to enable trainees to support learners at risk of not attaining a good pass at GCSE and another project to encourage post-16 learners to continue their science education. High

priority is given to widening participation in education across the region in anticipation of economic change, to trainee recruitment and to workforce and partnership development. Resources are well directed, for example, to support the variety of courses offered and to support entitlement if courses close, such as that in engineering. This illustrates the way creative solutions, arising from debate at management level and partnership meetings, are sought to long-standing problems. Subject tutors anticipate change well so that provision is up-to-date and demonstrates current best practice. There is a strong focus on national improvement priorities so that trainees are well-informed and prepared, for example, in supporting learners with their literacy or special educational needs.

Initial teacher education for the further education system (FE)

Context

43. The university provides training for full-time, pre-service and part-time in-service programmes for FE, leading to the PGCE or the certificate in education. The pre-service course is offered on campus while the in-service course is provided via partnerships with nine colleges based in the north-east of England. The university offers additional diplomas in literacy and numeracy, which are studied on an optional basis by pre-service trainees and also by qualified serving FE teachers. At the time of the inspection, 695 teachers were studying FE courses, 93 of them on the full-time, pre-service programme.

Key strengths

44. The key strengths are:
- the training in equality and diversity, which fully prepares trainees to teach in a culturally diverse society, to promote inclusion and diversity and to challenge prejudice with confidence
 - the consistently very good pastoral and academic support provided for trainees by tutors across the partnership
 - the outstanding training on the full-time programme, leading to very high outcomes for teachers
 - the consistently good or better training across the partnership, which results in trainees being reflective and self-critical, driving their own improvements and developing a good range of very effective practical skills
 - the strong team work and sharing of good practice displayed across the partnership, supported by the extensive development opportunities facilitated by the university
 - the training on the specialist diplomas in literacy and numeracy, which prepares trainees to assess learners' needs and plan to meet those needs exceptionally well.

Required actions

45. In order to increase the university's capacity to improve the quality of the training further, the partnership must:
- systematically collect, share and analyse data so that trends in retention and success are identified in a timely manner.

Recommendations

46. In order to improve outcomes for trainees, partners should:
- ensure that entry and progression routes are available to all prospective trainees and guide all prospective trainees to the most appropriate level of course
 - share best practice to continue to engage trainees who are at risk of non-completion because of loss of teaching hours.
47. In order to further improve the quality of training and assessment and ensure that all trainees achieve to their potential the university should:
- exploit the potential of the virtual learning environment as a teaching and learning tool and as a cohesive means of communication for trainees across the partnership
 - ensure the expertise and judgements of all mentors are utilised fully; all mentors have received appropriate and recent training and all have the necessary expertise and confidence.
48. In order to increase the university's capacity to improve the quality of the training further, the partnership should:
- identify measurable targets within all improvement plans to enable leaders and managers to monitor progress and to identify and share best practice in self-assessment across the partnership and to align university and partner systems.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

49. Trainees from across the partnership make good progress. Those who complete the programme attain well and there are no significant differences in attainment for trainees from different backgrounds. Success rates are very high on the pre-service programme and on the additional diplomas in literacy and numeracy. However, the success rates are low on in-service programmes in some colleges.
50. Training is at least good across the partnership and is outstanding for pre-service trainees. Trainees develop a very good range of effective practical skills. Their planning and teaching show they put their students' learning at the centre of their work. Trainees are highly reflective and self-critical and drive their own progress. They are committed to enhancing their own knowledge, skills and understanding of effective teaching strategies to ensure their students learn. Trainees use very well, in their own planning and teaching, the knowledge on inclusion and diversity gained from the course. They develop the confidence and skills to teach a range of learners effectively in a diverse society. Trainees display high levels of subject knowledge and are able to respond to students' misconceptions and questions effectively. This leads to classroom environments in which students are confident to contribute, are respectful of each other and feel comfortable to take risks and offer ideas.

51. Trainees on the pre-service programme are prepared well in the use of information learning technology. Pre-service trainees who are studying the optional diplomas in literacy and numeracy are prepared well to assess their learners' needs; they plan to meet those needs exceptionally well. However, across the partnership trainees display variable levels of competence to teach literacy and numeracy, and a few are weak.
52. Recruitment and selection processes are thorough. The recruitment process for the pre-service programme is especially rigorous; the entry qualifications of trainees are high and retention and success rates are very high. On the in-service programme, retention rates are low in some colleges. While most trainees who discontinue do so for valid reasons, such as redundancy or re-location, a few find their programme too challenging. In some colleges no provision from a national awarding body was available as an alternative and a very few trainees are allowed to start courses inadvisably. Recent outreach work has begun to attract a more diverse trainee cohort. Specific initiatives at two partner colleges have increased recruitment of Bangladeshi and Jewish women.
53. Training programmes are well structured and equip trainees with the knowledge, skills and experience required to teach in a diverse society. Trainees across the partnership, including those employed by outside training organisations, receive consistently good support from their tutors and express very high levels of satisfaction with them. Tutor teams are highly effective, cohesive and committed. All mentors are subject specialists and provide good support to trainees. However, in a few instances, trainees have had too many changes of mentors. Assignment feedback is generally strong, thorough, and developmental and helps trainees to improve. Feedback on teaching observations is developmental and constructive but does not always include subject specific advice. Observers do not always check targets for improvement from one observation to the next so assessment is not holistic. The personal learning plan encourages trainees to self-reflect and be self-critical and is effective in driving forward their improvement. However, the literacy or numeracy qualifications of a few trainees have not been tracked sufficiently and they have not gained their award in the expected time-frame. The personal learning plan process does not include enough opportunities for mentors to contribute, leading to insufficient emphasis on subject specialism within target-setting.
54. Learning environments in all providers are at least good. Trainees in many partner colleges benefit from higher education capital investment, funded by the university. An outreach worker is either based at or visits each partner college on a regular basis to address any administrative issues relating to enrolment, funding or accreditation. This is very well received by staff and trainees. The deployment of resources to develop teacher educators is a particular strength on the pre-service programme and increasingly so on the in-service programme. The university provides continuing professional development in partner organisations, has funded staff training and has supported bids with partner colleges for action research. Staff and trainees are

able to work together on 'block days' at the university, enabling further sharing of good practice. The university has put in additional resources in some partnership centres to address quality and staffing issues. The use of the university virtual learning environment is under-developed across the partnership. An on-line community of practice, which would challenge trainees, has not been developed. The innovative use of ICT for learning is limited. While there is investment in mentor training and development this is not at times to suit many mentors.

55. The quality of provision is good. Strong team working and sharing of good practice is evident across the partnership. An annual calendar of cluster, development and review meetings is provided and these meetings are well attended. The partnership programme manager conducts an annual monitoring visit at each centre and maintains other strong working links. Standardised policies, procedures, assessments and curriculum frameworks have been developed collaboratively and are implemented across the partnership. Clear and effective mechanisms support the transition of trainees from year one of one partner organisation into a linked partner college. However, trainee success rates are low on the two-year in-service programme in some colleges.
56. The promotion of equality of opportunity and approach to inclusion and diversity is outstanding. The well articulated equality and diversity strategy is based on thorough monitoring and evaluation, is effectively implemented and is impacting positively on trainees. The progress of different groups is monitored and no underachievement has been identified. Equality and diversity is well embedded into programmes of learning and is evidenced through many examples on trainees' lesson plans and schemes of work. The partnership is highly committed to equality and diversity. A long-standing block event further develops trainees' skills and enables them to share good practice. The action research project 'Tackling Prejudice Together' has engaged pre-service trainees innovatively in identifying personal instances of prejudice. They have used these as the basis for developing further training materials. Pre-service trainees are confidently challenging practice as a result. Staff across the partnership have been involved in further research on inclusion, presenting an international paper in Athens in July 2009.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

57. The partnership is strong and well resourced. It responds in a collegiate way to the need for change. Senior managers of all partner institutions engage in detailed strategic planning to meet local and regional needs. The university has a strong tradition of research in further education teacher training, which informs much practice. Research and resources, provided through both the University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, have informed professional knowledge and expertise and impacted positively on the teaching and learning of trainees in areas such as numeracy teaching and equality and diversity.

Extensive development opportunities exist across the partnership including university funded continuing professional development for all staff.

58. Self-evaluation leads to the accurate identification of strengths and areas for development, although the university has over-graded the quality of provision. Trainees' opinions are actively sought, issues are addressed rapidly and trainees express high levels of satisfaction. The particularly effective monitoring of the additional diploma programmes results in very high success rates. Effective partnership quality arrangements include cluster and moderation days, development days, and programme review days. In addition to the moderation of written and teaching assessment and the sharing of good practice, these sessions enable the university to monitor and record strengths across the partnership. The Partnership Programme Manager visits each partner college annually to conduct a review of the quality of provision and, additionally, conducts regular visits to deliver training or observe trainees. In this academic year, the university has undertaken detailed monitoring and evaluation of cohort progress within personal learning plans across the partnership, which is being used well to target support and quality improvement. Data collection across the partnership does not enable the university to identify retention issues in a timely manner across two-year programmes. There are discrepancies between university and college data records so that retention issues over two-year programmes in some colleges have not been identified by the university. The formal university annual review and annual partnership review for these programmes are neither evaluative nor strategic. Managers do not coordinate or evaluate evidence clearly enough or build as well as they could on partner self-assessment.
59. The university has accurately identified the programmes' and partners' strengths. Leaders have taken good action to bring about improvement. This includes additional support for new areas of work and/or new course managers. Outcomes on the pre-service programmes and on the additional diploma in literacy and numeracy have improved each year and are high. Action planning and additional support for colleges with lower success rates are beginning to have an impact, although low retention is a continuing issue over two-year programmes as it has not been identified under the current data collection system. Partnership-wide improvement strategies have been agreed for 2010/11, have been widely publicised and are well understood by all, including trainees. In addition, the university has agreed specific improvement actions with each college. However, action plans are not as incisive as they should be and do not include enough measurable targets. Feedback from external examiner reports is effectively tackled. Some major initiatives such as the introduction of the personal learning plan have been effectively implemented across the partnership.

Annex: Partnership colleges

60. The partnership includes the following colleges:

Northumberland College
Tyne Metropolitan College
Gateshead College
South Tyneside College
City of Sunderland College
Darlington College
Derwentside College
East Durham College
Bishop Auckland College
North Tyneside adult and community learning alliance

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	ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		3	1	2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2	1	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	3	2	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	3	1	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	3	1	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	3	1	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2	2	1

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Primary	Secondary	ITE for FE
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?		3	1	2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		3	1	2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		3	1	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		3	2	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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