

Northampton Teacher Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

Northampton School for Boys
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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 Northampton Teacher Training Partnership (NTTP) is a school-centred initial teacher training consortium that works in partnership with schools to provide secondary initial teacher training courses for the 11 – 16 age range in design and technology, English, mathematics and science. It offers qualified teacher status and a postgraduate certificate in education, the latter validated, for the first time this year, by the University of Bedfordshire. At the time of the inspection, there were 16 trainees on the course. It is well-established provision that makes a significant contribution to the recruitment of newly qualified teachers in local schools.

Provision in the secondary phase

Key strengths

- 4 The key strengths are:
- trainees' professionalism, the good relationships they develop with staff and pupils and their high expectations of the learners
 - the pivotal role of administrative support in facilitating excellent communication across the partnership that benefits support for, and attainment of, trainees
 - consistently good quality school placements, and their intelligent use by the provider, to provide contrasting experiences for trainees that are carefully matched to their individual needs
 - the expertise of school-based tutors in coaching their trainees towards improvement
 - the good work of the programme manager in developing a strong shared ethos of pastoral care that facilitates swift and effective intervention and support for trainees.

Required actions

5. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider must:
- sharply analyse trainees' attainment and use the information gathered to plan new and/or refine existing training and assessment systems to boost trainees' progress from good to outstanding.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- ensure that trainers consistently focus on the impact of trainees' teaching on pupils learning during feedback on the quality of lessons
 - develop trainers' ability to set and regularly review precise targets for improvement for trainees
 - provide more consistent opportunities for trainees to develop their understanding of teaching in a diverse society including their ability to plan for the needs of learners who speak English as an additional language.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. Trainees' attainment has been maintained at a good level over the past three years. Over 80% of those completing in 2010 achieved good or better levels of attainment by the end of their training.
8. This small partnership has a clear rationale to provide good quality teachers for local schools. Over time, the partnership has been very successful in fulfilling this

aim with the overwhelming majority of trainees finding employment locally, most in partner schools. Some departments in the partnership have the majority of their teachers trained by NTTP. Consequently, partner schools' commitment to training, and to developing trainees during and beyond their initial training, is very strong. Trainees integrate into training departments quickly and usually benefit from the best characteristics modelled by school-based trainers. As a result, the most notable strengths of trainees are their professionalism, the good relationships they develop with staff and pupils and their high expectations of the learners in their classes.

9. The selection process is rigorous, with candidates carefully assessed for their potential as teachers. Interview tasks are well-designed to identify suitable trainees and are carefully matched to the requirements of the four subjects. The selection procedure is very inclusive and candidates close to, but not quite meeting, the criteria for selection are invited back to perform an extra teaching task. Through this process, several good trainees have been recruited who might otherwise have been rejected. The provider has met or exceeded targets for minority ethnic recruitment in recent years. Excellent support for trainees both from course leaders and in placement schools has ensured high course completion rates. Withdrawals that do occasionally occur are monitored very carefully and reasons are usually found to be related to unforeseen changes in trainees' personal circumstances. Subject knowledge courses are used selectively to boost aspects of some trainees' subject knowledge before beginning the course. Subject knowledge information gathered at interview, including the completion of GCSE examination papers, is usually used by lead subject mentors to create an individual learning plan. However, inspectors found that this had not happened in the way intended in all cases, although a plan was always constructed. The provider is aware that there is scope to make better use of information gathered at interview to help school-based tutors (SBTs), who mentor trainees in schools, personalise training more effectively from the beginning of their first school placement.
10. Central training is good in how to teach students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Contrasting school placements are consistently good or better and are carefully selected and tailored to the needs of trainees. This provides trainees with exposure to a diverse range of students' learning needs during their training. Good contextual training in schools ensures that trainees are fully conversant with the full range of special educational needs and/or disabilities in their lessons and expected teaching strategies. Higher attaining trainees apply this preparation well in their lessons to begin to match tasks to the full range of ability. Training in key skills, such as literacy, is part of core professional studies and has a high profile in the central training of some but not all subjects. Trainees' application of good practice in this area in their lessons is inconsistent. Central training in behaviour management is good. Constructive training and feedback on the use of school behaviour policies by school-based trainers enhance, over time, trainees' ability to manage behaviour in school. Trainees also receive good central training in teaching students who speak English as an additional language. However, exposure to these learners is variable and dependent on placement schools and/or trainees' timetables. Consequently,

trainees' confidence in teaching students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds is inconsistent.

11. Communication across this small partnership is very strong. End-of-course evaluations from trainers and trainees and inspection evidence consistently highlight the work of the provider's administrative staff in very effectively supporting communication and, as a result, trainees' outcomes. This close-knit partnership knows its strengths very well. For example, partnership expertise, including Advanced Skills Teachers, is used well to deliver good quality central training. Central subject studies are well regarded and effectively coordinated by lead subject mentors who are well thought of in all subject areas.
12. Assessment procedures are comprehensive and include the use of Ofsted's published criteria for the characteristics of trainees. The provider is using these at the end of placement one and at the end of training to grade the quality of trainees at two points in their training. However, the criteria were designed to be, 'used to assess a trainee's attainment at, or towards, the end of the training programme'. In final summative use, the provider is generally accurate against the criteria and school based trainers, who carry out the initial assessment prior to moderation, have a clear rationale for their judgements supported by extensive evidence. However, particularly at the end of placement one, application of the criteria across the partnership is inconsistent. This can leave trainees confused about their progress and does not provide precise information to trainers to maximise trainee's progress. This is particularly the case if the first assessment is too generous and an accurate end of second placement assessment results in a similar grading. Nevertheless, ongoing formative assessment of trainees' progress is good. Feedback from trainers does not always provide trainees with a sharp understanding of the impact of their teaching on the quality of pupils' learning. It does consistently give good and very good feedback on trainees' teaching with most school-based trainers being highly skilled in coaching their trainees towards improvement. As a result, most trainees make good progress.
13. Over time, school-based trainers have been trained by the partnership and, as many of them were trainees with NTTP, the understanding of policy and procedure is strong. The work of school-based trainers is evaluated very highly by trainees at the end of the course. Trainees usually get their full entitlement of one-to-one meetings. These have been quality assured by the provider to ensure consistency of experience. Written records of one-to-one meetings are comprehensive but targets for development often lack precision and a focus on Standards focus, and are often not reviewed the following week. Consequently, although the provider checks the completion and recording of one-to-one sessions, following email submission, it is difficult to track trainees' progress and ensure progress is consistently maximised. However, the learning conversations that take place during these meetings are stronger than the records of them. As a result, trainees have a greater understanding of the aim and the rationale of set targets than is provided in writing.

14. The transition between trainees' two school placements is supported by a first placement report and target setting with lead subject mentors. Placement reports are generally good, giving a full account of trainees' strengths against the Standards. There is some variability in the quality of target setting for improvement to identify the most important areas for trainees' development. This means that the school-based trainers on the second placement are not always able to build rapidly on trainees' prior experience but instead tend to establish their own benchmarks for trainees. This can lead to a short term dip in trainees' performance at the start of the second placement.
15. Trainees are provided with laptops as part of their training. The benefits of this are evident in trainees' teaching which is well supported by and structured through the use of interactive whiteboards. Trainees confirm that school-based resourcing meets their needs. The new link with the University of Bedfordshire has allowed access to university resources and trainees also have access to the University of Northamptonshire's virtual library, both of which help them in the completion of assignments. The four assignments support well trainees' reflection on teaching and learning.
16. The programme manager knows all of the trainees very well and has developed a strong ethos of pastoral care that supports trainees' progress across the partnership. Excellent communication facilitates swift intervention for any struggling trainee. Intimate knowledge of the training departments in the partnership allows trainees to be placed in just the right environment to support their progress. For example, struggling trainees are placed in nurturing departments that very effectively support their successful completion of the course.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

17. The provider has good capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and demonstrates determination to take any actions required to secure further improvements. It has targeted all of the points for action and consideration identified in the previous inspection. This has resulted in significant improvements in most areas. For example, lead subject mentors, who had too little time for their role, are now effective. The provider's self evaluation of the quality of provision is slightly generous believing many areas to be outstanding. This is, in part, due to very positive feedback from partnership staff and the external examiner. Inspectors judged that there was further scope to raise trainees' attainment by sharpening and refining systems to accurately target improvements in training and assessment to boost trainees' progress.
18. The self-evaluation process involves comprehensive feedback from all stakeholders and a range of formal and informal evidence. The opinions of professional tutors, school-based trainers and headteachers are actively sought and school-based staff feel their opinion is valued and acted upon. Informal feedback is facilitated by very effective communications and the good

relationships between trainees, the programme manager, schools and lead subject mentors that exist across the partnership. The programme manager and/or lead subject mentors visit trainees regularly on placement and their quality assurance work with school-based trainers, including joint observation, provides regular information about the quality of training across the partnership. Professional tutors carry out well their role defined in course handbooks. However, their quality assurance role is underdeveloped.

19. Trainees' evaluations of the quality of central training, and the need to improve coherence of training identified at the time of the last inspection, have led to significant changes in the order and content of programmes. The leadership team has a good understanding of current strengths and areas in need of further development and carefully collects, collates and evaluates data about provision and employment and retention outcomes. However, there is not a sharp analysis of trainees' attainment to see for example, whether there are any common areas of the Standards where attainment is slightly lower or that stops good trainees becoming outstanding ones by the end of the course. In contrast, where a trainee may be struggling, the provider is swift to analyse the areas of performance that require improvement and to set specific targets that support progress very effectively.
20. The external examiner's reports attest to, and inspection evidence supports, the accuracy of final assessment systems. The commentary on the course structures and content is useful in providing an external perspective on the quality of the course but the provider is aware there is scope to use the process to help assess the impact of targeted improvements on provision. Partnership staff are aware of the provider's priorities for improvement but less sure of their part in delivering them.
21. The provider responds well to national and local priorities. Course leaders have successfully introduced improved training in the teaching of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, improved provision for literacy and developed effective behaviour management training. Revision of subject programmes to reflect national subject initiatives has been facilitated by lead subject mentors being active practitioners who are well aware of current developments in their subjects. These adaptations are stronger in reflecting academic rather than vocational course changes due to the nature of the schools in the partnership. The lead school is also well-informed about changes to national policy; with its partner schools it is applying for Teaching School status. Smooth transition has been achieved in switching to a new validating body for the postgraduate certificate in education.
22. Plans for improvement and related actions are based on good self-evaluation. They have led to maintaining trainees' attainment at a high level, good retention and excellent employment. There are no action plans for individual subjects but all lead subject mentors are part of the course operating management group and as such have a role in whole course planning. Course improvement plans clearly target key areas for improvement in provision and identify time lines and

monitoring. They do not focus on the expected impact of actions on trainees' attainment and other outcomes.

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

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

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