

University of Plymouth

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Inspection dates 23 – 27 March 2009
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Reference no. 080190

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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

The provider

3. The University of Plymouth's post-compulsory education and training provision is located in the Faculty of Education and organised through the School of Secondary and Further Education Studies. Training takes place at the university and in partnership with six further education (FE) colleges in the South West of England. Programmes include one-year full-time and two-year part-time initial teacher education (ITE) courses for 699 in-service FE teachers, working mostly in FE colleges. In addition, there are 110 pre-service trainees, located at the university and two of the colleges. Courses lead to either a Professional Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or a Certificate in Education (Cert Ed). Just over two-thirds of the trainees are on the Cert Ed course. In addition, the university provides training for 12 full-time trainees on a one-year, pre-service specialist diploma in Teaching English (Literacy) in the lifelong learning sector. Full-time trainees attend the university or the college for two days each week for training and attend the placement for the other three days. All qualifications are within the university's academic framework and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teacher education. The university is the lead member of the Peninsula Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT).
4. The partnership's FE ITE provision was inspected in 2006/07 and was judged to be inadequate.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
 - the successful strategies that have secured and sustained improvements in trainees' outcomes
 - the highly effective support that enables trainees to fulfil their potential in developing their teaching skills
 - the good response to local and national initiatives throughout the partnership.

Required actions

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership must:
 - ensure that the outcomes of initial assessments contribute to the establishment of accurate individual development plans that are regularly reviewed and updated
 - broaden trainees' understanding of equality and diversity so that they can apply it more confidently in their teaching.
7. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership must:
 - ensure that all trainees benefit from high quality mentoring across the partnership.

Recommendations

8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - ensure that all trainees benefit from the use of shared resources across the partnership
 - ensure that all trainees develop the skills to be reflective practitioners from the start of their training.
9. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership should:
 - set recruitment targets for trainees by ethnicity, disability, gender and age
 - ensure that minimum requirements for partners' contribution to self-evaluation are identified and that the self-evaluation document is more incisive in its analysis of the quality of provision.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

10. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the rates of successful completion for both pre- and in-service trainees, especially on the Cert Ed course, have improved substantially across the partnership with no significant variations between different groups of trainees. Most pre-service trainees gain full-time employment in the post-16 sector. Inspectors agree with the partnership's judgement that trainees' attainment is satisfactory.

11. Recruitment and selection arrangements are satisfactory. Clear criteria are in place to ensure potential trainees meet the legislative requirements for study. Procedures are fair and reasonably thorough, directing most trainees to the right course.

12. As a result of the highly effective personal and academic support from their tutors and mentors, the majority of trainees now fulfil their potential in developing their teaching skills. Trainees enter from a wide variety of starting points and most make rapid progress and develop a range of teaching and assessment strategies that take account of their learners' individual needs, incorporate imaginative learning techniques and make productive use of time. Trainees who are new to teaching benefit from the constructive feedback from lesson observations to improve their practice. They make good use of the opportunity to be observed performing specific tasks, such as the formal assessment of learners. Those with many years of teaching experience have significantly improved their lesson planning, use a wider range of assessment strategies and integrate ICT more into their teaching. Much improved since the previous inspection, mentoring is increasingly effective in developing trainees' subject pedagogy. Trainees have benefited from mentors' skills in supporting them to deliver the theoretical content of lessons, to use relevant question and answer techniques, and to apply behaviour management strategies. A small minority has made slower progress overall mainly as a result of difficulties in adapting their teaching style to more learner-centred approaches. Most trainees now benefit from sufficient breadth of practice, although a small minority teaches only at one level.

13. The quality and use of initial assessment vary considerably across the partnership. All partners include an initial assessment of trainees' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Whilst the partnership has generally good arrangements in place to assess trainees' literacy skills, those for numeracy and ICT are less effective. Individual development plans do not contain sufficient reference to or review of trainees' developmental needs, making it difficult to monitor fully trainees' progress. Although target setting has improved considerably since the previous inspection, some targets in these individual development plans are not sufficiently specific or measurable.

14. The development of trainees' skills as reflective practitioners varies across the partnership. Pre-service trainees generally use the feedback from assessment well to

help them develop their own self-evaluation skills. Their reviews of lessons are evaluative, include insightful reference to education theorists and link to the taught elements of the course. However, many in-service trainees, especially on the Cert Ed course, develop these skills slowly and produce highly descriptive reviews of lessons that lack sufficient reflective detail of the impact of teaching on learning.

15. Assessment is satisfactory. The procedures for evaluating trainees' progress and attainment lead to secure graded assessments. Tutors provide trainees with accurate and detailed feedback from observed lessons that, together with the clear action plan, helps them make progress. For a small minority of trainees, the written feedback from lessons observed by mentors lacks sufficient detail and action points to identify fully areas for development. Tutors mark assignments thoroughly and generally provide detailed and valuable feedback.

16. The extent to which available resources are used effectively and efficiently across the partnership is satisfactory and agrees with the partnership's self-evaluation. Teacher trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced. In-service trainees benefit from good resources in their colleges, but some do not take advantage of the university's facilities. Whilst all have access to the partnership's virtual learning environment, a few prefer to use those in the colleges where they are based. The partnership shares some staffing through secondments from the colleges to support quality assurance arrangements but the sharing of subject-based resources across the partnership is insufficient.

17. Since the previous inspection, the extent to which the provision across the partnership is consistently of a high quality has improved and is now satisfactory. The partnership has developed more rigorous quality assurance arrangements that have led to improvements in trainees' outcomes. It has improved the use and analysis of data, resulting in improved successful completion rates. Staff development across the partnership has concentrated on priority topics. Most trainees now demonstrate good awareness of initiatives in the post-16 sector with many already prepared to teach the first phase of 14-19 Diplomas in the coming year. All trainees now have subject-based mentors. However, the partnership has not yet trained all mentors and has not implemented effective quality assurance arrangements to ensure that all trainees in the partnership, especially the few trainees who work in settings outside the colleges, benefit from the same high quality mentoring.

18. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory and enjoys a high profile within the partnership. The proportion of trainees representing minority ethnic groups matches closely the regional demography. For those with disabilities, the partnership recruits in line with higher education national averages. In terms of gender, the partnership reflects closely the national FE workforce trend. However, although the partnership analyses the enrolment of trainees from diverse groups, it does not set targets for their recruitment.

19. The partnership has ensured that trainees are secure in reporting discriminatory, harassment or bullying incidents. Adjustments have been made for trainees with individual support needs. Trainees are aware of their rights and

responsibilities and how to resolve problems or raise complaints. The majority of trainees demonstrate good awareness of equality and diversity through their assignments. Some include wider cultural references in their teaching. However, their understanding of the active promotion of equality and diversity through classroom practice is narrow with little appreciation of how to challenge discriminatory attitudes or behaviour in their lessons or how to develop strategies for teaching diverse and sometimes potentially challenging groups.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

20. The partnership has good capacity to take the actions required to secure further improvements. Since the previous inspection, as a result of a detailed recovery process and action plan, supported by all levels of management, the partnership has maintained and developed all of its key strengths whilst dealing effectively with the many areas for attention.

21. Successful strategies have secured and sustained improvements in trainees' outcomes. The provision has been relocated to the new School of Secondary and Further Education Studies and now benefits from a tighter management structure as well as new teaching accommodation at the university. Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened throughout the partnership. Two quality assurance coordinators now work across the partnership and through the local programme committee boards compile regular quality reports. Roles and responsibilities are clear and communication across the partnership is good. The pace of change has increased over the last year as a result of more effective leadership from the university, to which partner colleges have responded positively. Areas for attention have been systematically tackled, with progress carefully monitored. For example, arrangements for ensuring that trainees receive subject specialist support are much improved as are the procedures for reviewing trainees' progress, target setting and action planning. Trainees make better progress in improving their teaching skills and employing institutions have observed that trainees are now substantially better prepared to teach.

22. The self-evaluation process has improved and is now good. The partnership is now assiduous in collecting and analysing trainees' views of their experiences on the course and in the workplace. Trainees' representatives make a valuable contribution to local programme committee boards, and regular surveys of trainees' views play an important role in self-evaluation and continuous improvement. The partnership has redesigned its assignment briefs in direct response to trainees' concerns that they were overly complex and repetitive in terms of learning outcomes. Data are used increasingly well to analyse trainees' progress and the overall performance of partners. All partners contribute to the self-evaluation document either through their own self-assessment process or through local programme committee boards. However, the partnership has not identified clearly the minimum requirements for partners' contributions to the self-evaluation process and, although much is good, there is some variability in the quality of input. The partnership's overall self-

evaluation identifies accurately and concisely the priorities for further development. However, the self-evaluation document is too descriptive of processes and as a consequence lacks incisive analysis of some aspects of the partnership's work.

23. The moderation of trainees' written work is thorough and accurate and leads to the consistent and fair application of standards across the partnership. A recent development has been the grading of trainees' lessons by trainers and mentors. The judgements made through this process are accurate. The partnership successfully uses paired observations to moderate grades and to ensure consistency.

24. Throughout the partnership, the response to local and national initiatives is good, a strength recognised at the previous inspection. The range of provision is effective in meeting the needs of trainees and potential teachers throughout the region. As a result of the close links with human resources in each college, the partnership has been particularly successful at analysing and recruiting trainees to national and local shortage subjects. The university and the colleges participate in a range of projects, many of which are innovative, in response both to the desire to improve professional practice and to contribute to external priorities and agendas. Staff development across the partnership has concentrated on priority topics, such as mentoring, developing a wider understanding of the post-16 sector and the new professional standards. The CETT plays an increasingly important role as a quality improvement tool through instigating relevant research and development, and in disseminating findings that are used to help to improve trainees' outcomes. Recent projects have included improving links between human resources and ITE, improving the breadth of practice, and gaining professional recognition.

25. The partnership has coherent and effective strategies in place to sustain improvement. Until recently, the need to improve trainees' outcomes had been an overriding strategic aim as a result of the previous inspection. However, the partnership, through strategic review, careful planning and consultation, has now established challenging objectives designed to consolidate progress, secure more improvement, and further develop the scope of the provision to raise trainees' outcomes.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Bicton College
City of Bristol College
Cornwall College
North Devon College
Somerset College
Truro College

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

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		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?		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 July 2008; Reference no: 080128.

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