

# Buckinghamshire New University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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**Provider address** Buckinghamshire New University  
High Wycombe Campus  
Queen Alexandra Road  
High Wycombe  
Buckinghamshire  
HP11 2JZ

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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. Buckinghamshire New University offers training leading to the status of Qualified Teacher, Learning and Skills. Taught at its partner colleges, the university offers a two-year, part-time diploma to teach in the lifelong learning sector (DTLLS). The qualification meets statutory requirements and is endorsed by Standards Verification UK.
4. The DTLLS programme is a two-year, part-time course made up of nine modules, the first of which comprises the preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) qualification. Trainees who already have PTLLS, or who qualify for other reasons under the university's credit accumulation and transfer scheme for prior accreditation, join the DTLLS programme after the first module. Teaching on the programme is provided predominantly by the teacher trainers at the partner colleges; a small university team also contributes to the teaching provision for one module in the second year of the programme.

5. The partnership includes three colleges of further education. Currently, two of the colleges have no trainees enrolled. At the time of inspection there were just 16 in-service trainees on the first year of the diploma programme, attending Aylesbury College. Most of the trainees work as teachers at the college and teach on vocational programmes, but a small number are from external employers such as police forces, young offenders' institutions or prisons.

## **Initial teacher education for the further education system**

### **Key strengths**

6. The key strengths are:
- the good development of trainees' practical teaching skills and confidence
  - trainees' good ability to link theory and practice
  - the high levels of trainee attainment and retention
  - trainees' highly professional approach to their teaching
  - the good attention to equality and diversity in trainees' teaching
  - the close links between the university and its partner college.

### **Required actions**

7. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider must improve the external marketing of provision and seek to broaden trainees' experience of the wider learning and skills context.

### **Recommendations**

8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- develop a forum, or other advice and discussion group for mentors, so that good practice in trainee support may be more easily identified and shared
  - ensure that trainees external to the colleges are apprised of the nature of the course and the likely balance between internal and external students
  - ensure that all trainees are supported in gaining the requisite information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their teaching
  - further develop the virtual learning environment so that it is able to support interactive and on-line learning.

## Overall effectiveness

## Grade: 2

9. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Achievement, success and retention rates have all risen across the past three years. During 2008/09 and 2009/10, success rates were 100% for first and second years of the DTLLS programme at all partner colleges. During 2009/10, all trainees passed all modules of the DTLLS programme. All trainees who need to, achieve Level 2 in literacy and/or numeracy during the programme.
10. The programme provides good flexibility for applicants. Trainees may receive accreditation for prior learning, or prior certificated learning, depending on their needs and circumstances. Such flexibility contributes to trainees' motivation and to the good retention and success rates of the programme. Trainees experience the course as an integrated programme and value being part of the university. They particularly find benefits in having access to a wider range of resources for research. Trainees would welcome observation by Buckinghamshire New University staff in addition to college trainers.
11. All colleges have monitored attendance and punctuality, and in 2009/10 the average attendance rate was good, at 94%. As was the case at the previous inspection, all trainees are following a programme appropriate to their career aspirations, their previous qualifications and their skills levels. Whatever their starting points, trainees make good progress during the course and quickly develop a wide range of flexible teaching skills. Those trainees who had finished the first DTLLS module during inspection were knowledgeable and confident in discussion of course elements. Former trainees found the course appropriately demanding and challenging. They felt it provided a very good preparation for teaching. Trainees spoke of the course giving them the confidence to experiment and take risks in a safe environment.
12. Trainees demonstrate high levels of professionalism in their approach to their teaching role, including those trainees joining the programme at the start of DTLLS module two. They aspire to professional status, and seek to develop professional practice and understanding through their work on the course. All trainees are able to make clear and confident links between the theoretical elements of their programme and their current classroom practice. Even at an early stage of the course, trainees can discuss theories of learning and ways that such knowledge might affect their lesson planning and their students' progress.
13. Initial assessment, diagnostic testing and interviews are effective in selecting trainees who have suitable qualifications and skills. The selection process is also effective in identifying the study and support needs of trainees. These are well met, both at the partner college and at the university's learning development unit, which can support students face to face or online. Trainees appear to be well matched to the programme and make good increases in

confidence and understanding during even the first module of the course. Individual tutorial records provide a good record of discussions and have clear actions to be completed within a realistic timeframe. The records demonstrate that trainees make good progress through the programme. Individual learning plans provide trainees with a good support towards meeting assessment and developmental targets.

14. All trainees interviewed had experienced appropriate interviews, diagnostic testing for literacy and numeracy at some stage prior to the course. They generally found the information received at the start of the programme clear and helpful. However, those from external organisations were surprised by the relatively large numbers of college trainees, and would have liked some indication of this before starting the course. Good induction arrangements exist for trainees, both at the university and at Aylesbury College, at whatever stage they join the programme. These include guides and access to the two institutions' facilities and support services.
15. In their lesson planning, trainees' reflect on student abilities and needs. Their classroom management is effective and trainees are confident even when dealing with some large student groups. Their questioning techniques are effective, with an appropriate mix of general, indirect and direct questions used to elicit responses from all students. Most trainees are confident and adept at using electronic and other learning technologies, though some trainees who do not work in college environments would benefit from earlier sessions on working with ICT during lessons. Particularly good attention is given to equality and diversity in trainees' lesson planning. In their teaching, trainees demonstrate some good strategies for initiating discussion and broadening students' awareness of equality and diversity issues.
16. Assessment criteria are clear. Assignments are well marked with detailed comments, good identification of strengths and areas for development and useful action points for improvement. Trainees who had begun the DTLLS programme and been assessed as part of the PTLLS module appreciated the thoroughness of the course assessment. Those trainees who had been accredited for prior learning and exempted from the PTLLS module were at too early a stage to have been assessed. The provider makes accurate judgements about trainees' progress and abilities.
17. Lesson observation and tutorial and assignment feedback all suggest a good understanding of trainees' strengths and areas for development amongst trainers, and an accurate assessment of needs. Feedback following the observation of trainees' teaching is copious, constructive and well-aligned to assessment criteria and national standards. Feedback from all staff gives trainees clear actions and direction for improvement. Observers generally pay good attention to both the practical and theoretical elements of trainees' practice. Comments frequently give good practical, classroom-management advice which is very helpful to new or inexperienced trainees.
18. Most trainees had attended a mentor/mentee event and were aware of their own and their mentors' roles and responsibilities. Mentors are suitably

experienced, and provide good support for trainees in the development of vocational and subject specialisms and classroom practice. The mentor handbook is thorough and outlines the role clearly, and a new pro-forma for recording mentoring discussions allows better recording of action points with deadlines. Trainees particularly value support from university mentors during the action research module. However, some mentors are not clear about how their views are taken account of in the university's quality assurance arrangements. Also, a number of mentors were not aware that they have access to the college and university virtual learning environments to support trainees. No forum, virtual or otherwise, currently exists for mentors to share good practice across the partnership.

19. Resources for study at the university and at Aylesbury College are good. Support needs are well met by both institutions. The college provides a good environment for learning and teaching, and trainees are able to encounter advanced practitioners and other more experienced colleagues from whom they can learn. External trainees, however, do not always have such immediate access to high quality resources and teaching environments. Trainers and trainees use the university and college virtual learning environments, but these mainly serve as repositories for course notes, electronic presentations, assignment criteria and course timetables and outlines, rather than being used interactively.
20. The university and the college have improved their attention to equality and diversity training since the previous inspection. Equality and diversity staff at the university have delivered training and confidence-building sessions at the college, and these have been helpful to trainees. The university has now begun to monitor three-year trend data for equality and diversity at institutional level, though the programme team has been doing this for some time. Trainees showed good awareness of equality and diversity matters in discussions and in their teaching were able to demonstrate a good concern for the development of students' awareness and confidence in relation to equalities.

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

**Grade: 2**

21. The partnership has good capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and to take the actions required to secure improvements. With only a single partner college at present, quality is very well monitored, though robust and comprehensive systems are in place for quality assurance across a wider partnership. Across the past three years standards and outcomes have clearly improved in all aspects of the programme. Since the previous inspection, in 2009, the university and college teams have made all the required and recommended improvements to provision, and have generally built upon identified strengths.
22. Outcomes for trainees have improved year on year, though enrolment declined across the partnership last year. The decline was not connected to programme

quality or trainee experience, but was the result of funding and strategic decision making by individual colleges and their employment and human resource needs. The university's response to the diminution of the partnership has been constructive and open, and those colleges which do not currently have enrolled trainees are still seen as partners. Senior university staff provide unambiguous statements about the value of the university-college relationship, which gives a degree of clarity and certainty to the course team and to trainees. Communication with the current partner college is clear in all matters relating to university strategy in relation to initial teacher education. The college receives good support and enjoys very good communications and relationships with the university, between course team members and amongst senior managers.

23. Staff at the college are well qualified, and are active members of a regional quality assurance and good practice sharing body which supports moderation and standards setting. University and college staff also benefit from engagement with the one of the national centres for excellence in teacher training. College staff take up many of the frequently offered, professional development opportunities at the university, and there have been a number of training and development activities delivered at the college by university staff, including some in equality and diversity. Liaison and communications between the university link tutor and the college are strong, at formal and informal levels. Inter-institutional links and relationships are good at operational, quality, planning and strategic levels, and these help maintain the currency and quality of provision.
24. The university's self-assessment document, though referring to a broader partnership now not operating, is evaluative and suitably searching in its analysis of programme strengths and areas for development. It draws on a good range of evidence, and a wide range of partnership data are usefully analysed. The document makes good links to trainees' needs and outcomes when evaluating provision. At college level, the quality course review, the annual review and evaluation document, and the self-assessment document for the initial teacher education curriculum area, are similarly focused on trainees' outcomes and needs. These documents are evaluative and constructive, with some good identification of areas for development, though they do not generally contain clear dates or milestones for achievement.
25. Moderation arrangements are effective in ensuring that standards of assessed work meet course requirements. External examining arrangements have improved over recent years, and external examiners' views help shape course improvements. The programme uses an effective course representative system to garner trainee feedback. Previous trainees were able to cite examples of occasions when aspects of courses had been changed and improved in response to their feedback and evaluation comments.
26. Planning for improvement is good. Co-operation and planning for the promotion of equality and diversity across the partnership is much improved. At the university and college, appropriate schemes and action plans are now in place. Disability and gender equality schemes are supported by clear action



plans to monitor and address any achievement gaps. Currently, minority ethnic and other identifiable groups are performing at the same rate and make the same progress as other groups. However, the partnership has yet to implement clear strategies for targeted marketing to non-college trainees, and the makeup of each cohort still depends largely on college recruitment and employment activity. The partnership is now developing plans for the wider marketing of the PTLLS and DTLLS programmes, in order to attract more external trainees, and to give college trainees a wider experience and understanding of the learning and skills sector.

## **Annex: Partnership colleges**

The partnership includes the following colleges:

- Aylesbury College
- Amersham and Wycombe College
- East Berkshire College

## 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

		ITE for FE
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>2</b>
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

		ITE for FE
<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>2</b>
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

<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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