

Plymouth University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Faculty of Education Rolle Building Drake Circus Plymouth PL4 8AA
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Unique reference number	70059
Inspection number	373098
Inspection dates	5–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Linda Truscott HMI

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high-quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. Plymouth University's post-compulsory education and training provision is located in the Faculty of Health, Education and Society and organised through the School of Education. The university works in partnership with seven further education colleges across the region to offer generic initial teacher education leading to qualified teacher learning and skills status in the post-compulsory and further education system. Training takes place at the university and in the further education colleges in the partnership. The university offers full-time, pre-service provision leading to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the Certificate in Education. There are currently 66 trainees on this programme. In partnership with the further education colleges, the university offers part-time, in-service and pre-service programmes leading to the PGCE and the Certificate in Education. There are currently 80 trainees on these pre-service programmes and 305 trainees on in-service programmes at partner colleges. All qualifications satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for further education teacher education.

Strengths

4. The key strengths are:
- the good leadership and management which have resulted in improvements in the quality of the provision
 - the good teacher training
 - the strong and collaborative partnership working
 - the highly effective mentors and tutors who support trainees' personal and professional development
 - the good use of individual development plans which develop trainees and monitor their progress
 - the high quality of feedback on assignments and observations which helps trainees to improve their skills.

Required actions

5. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership must:
- raise expectations so that more trainees achieve the highest grades and make the progress necessary to fulfil their potential.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- further improve trainees' ability to promote equality and diversity in their classroom practice
 - make better use of mentors to develop trainees' subject specialist teaching skills.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees is good. Since the previous inspection, the rates of successful completion for both pre-service and in-service trainees have improved. Success rates across the partnership for trainees on in-service programmes increased significantly to 70% in 2010/11. For trainees on pre-service programmes, attainment across the partnership increased to 89% in 2009/10. However, it

decreased to 79% for pre-service trainees completing their programmes in 2010/11.

8. Outcomes for trainees on both the pre-service and the in-service courses are good. The percentage of trainees on in-service programmes who attain good or better grades has remained high at around 90%. The proportion of trainees on pre-service programmes who attain similar grades is also high at 85% in 2010/11. There are no significant variations across the partnership. Most trainees make good progress from the start of their programmes. There has not been a stable pattern of improvement in the proportion of trainees who achieve the highest grades and some of the most-able trainees are not sufficiently challenged. Surveys of the destinations of trainees indicate that a high proportion of respondents are still in the profession after 12 to 24 months. For trainees on pre-service programmes, job outcomes are good. Inspectors agree with the partnership's judgement that trainees' attainment is good.
9. Recruitment and selection are fair and consistent across the partnership. The partnership has improved its procedures in order to assess more accurately an applicant's suitability for teaching. Current arrangements for recruitment and selection are very effective in determining applicants' aptitude for teaching in further education and their awareness and understanding of post-compulsory education. Recruitment and selection are particularly thorough in most, though not all, centres. Trainees are well prepared for the demands of the course and the profession. The partnership has used data well to show that there are few under-represented groups amongst the trainee population and that recruitment matches the profile of the local population. Where retention has been low, the university has valid explanations for trainee withdrawals.
10. Teacher training is good and trainees benefit from and enjoy their training. However, for some pre-service trainees, the individual and long-term planning of some work placements, to help set milestones and monitor their progress, is insufficient. Trainees make good progress as a result of the high quality of the teaching staff, who have a good understanding of the needs of the learning and skills sector. They recognise their tutors as good role models and replicate their ideas and activities in their own practice. Mentors and tutors provide very good support which enables trainees to develop both personally and professionally. Trainees develop good, practical teaching skills and are able to use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to support learners' development. Most trainees become very effective, reflective practitioners and many are able to apply theory very successfully to support their practical skills in the classroom.
11. Individual development plans are used very well to facilitate trainees' development and to integrate the various components of training. Their use ensures tutor, mentor and trainee are fully aware of a trainee's developmental needs and that all contribute to setting specific targets to help trainees improve. For most trainees, the development planning process also improves their reflective practice and enables them to become more self-critical. However, individual development plans do not always provide sufficient information on how targets will be achieved.

12. The partnership makes good use of initial assessment to identify trainees' individual needs and provides them with effective and timely support. In most cases, individual development plans are used well to check whether support needs have been satisfactorily met. The university has revised and improved its assessment programme to provide a coherent structure that partners can adapt to meet the needs and circumstances of local trainees. Comments on assignments and all observations are particularly good. They are detailed and constructive, and adapted for different levels or for the requirements of particular trainees. They identify what trainees have done well and what they need to do to improve, and comments are used well to set targets in trainees' individual development plans. Moderation and standardisation processes are highly inclusive and thorough. They result in clear action for improvement where necessary.
13. Trainees benefit from good resources which are deployed well. Tutors and mentors are well qualified and knowledgeable. They are accessible and support trainees well. The university has developed and improved its virtual learning environment since the previous inspection and colleges donate good examples of teaching resources. Partner colleges appreciate and make good use of these resources. Trainees on pre-service programmes develop their practical teaching skills as a result of placements which are well resourced and up to date. The university identifies its priorities well and deploys resources accordingly.
14. Partners work well together to the mutual benefit of partnership staff and trainees. The partnership provides good opportunities for continuing professional development for staff which improves the quality of provision for trainees. Secondments, meetings, networking and practical activities, such as the moderation of assessment, support the exchange of information and ideas across the partnership. The university is clearly perceived as the lead coordinator. However, the majority of staff across the partnership take advantage of the good opportunities to participate in development work such as the recent innovation, creativity and enterprise project.
15. Trainees understand concepts of equality and diversity well. Equality, diversity and safeguarding are well embedded in the programme through training, written assignments and observations of teaching. Trainees demonstrate a sound grasp of this area, treating their learners fairly and as individuals. They pay particularly careful attention to the needs of those learners who require additional support and they are generally well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society. However, they are less well prepared for promoting equality and diversity to their own learners in the curriculum. Trainees are treated fairly and are confident about reporting instances of bullying or harassment should they arise. Recruitment and selection pay good attention to equality and diversity. The university ensures that it sets and meets targets to match the regional profile of the population and local workforce requirements.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

16. Outcomes for trainees have improved since the last inspection with an increasing trend in the percentage of trainees who successfully complete their programmes and a high proportion of trainees judged to be at least good at the end of their courses. The partnership has a good capacity to maintain the improvements to outcomes and to the quality of provision which have been made since the previous inspection, and to secure further improvements.
17. Self-evaluation is considered, comprehensive and self-critical. The process is inclusive, involving all partners and trainees. The partnership uses a wide range of information to evaluate the provision, including programme reviews, programme area committee meetings and discussions, reports from moderation and standardisation meetings, and the views of trainees. Self-evaluation focuses well on outcomes for trainees and accurately identifies strengths and areas for development. The partnership makes good use of reliable evidence, including analyses of the outcomes for all trainees at programme, partner, cohort and individual levels. As a result of this analytical self-evaluation, the partnership has made improvements to outcomes for trainees and the quality of the provision. However, some aspects of the resulting self-evaluation document are not sufficiently well supported with appropriate evidence.
18. Leadership and management are good. The partnership has a clear structure at all levels. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and are clearly understood by all. The structure is well supported by thorough systems and procedures, and appropriate documentation. Communication at all levels is good and work across the partnership is collaborative and effective. Partnership leaders and managers are open, flexible and responsive, and the partnership is stable and well established. New members of the partnership appreciate the strong and helpful support they have received which has enabled them to participate effectively and improve outcomes for trainees. Where existing partners have experienced significant changes in staffing, they have been supported well by the partnership to ensure a smooth transition with no adverse effects on trainees.
19. Action planning for improvement is detailed and thorough. The quality improvement plan is monitored and implemented systematically across the partnership. Monitoring leads to feedback and action planning for each partner, which ensures consistency across the partnership. However, the local needs for flexibility are acknowledged and accepted. Action planning is clearly focused on those aspects of provision that have been identified as needing further improvement and has led to improvements in quality and consistency. Recruitment and selection, and mentoring arrangements, have been strengthened and standardised across the partnership. The partnership has taken account of the views of tutors, mentors and trainees in redesigning the curriculum to provide better opportunities for trainees to develop and make progress. Programme starting dates have been modified as a result of the

analysis of data on trainee withdrawals. This action has been successful in retaining more trainees on their programmes.

20. While there are no significant differences in trainee outcomes across the partnership, there are still some minor variations in performance between partner colleges. Managers at the university monitor the performance of partner colleges thoroughly and follow up any underperformance against partnership targets with good support and effective action. The university has set historically low targets for attainment and retention across the partnership. This has been successful in elevating the performance of each partner to a minimum level and has not prevented some partners from reaching higher levels of performance. However, the university plans to set higher performance targets which are differentiated according to the two main types of provision. The university has a collaborative approach to improvement planning and development, and makes good use of the best available skills across the partnership.
21. The partnership has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to anticipate and respond well to change. It is highly effective in its acknowledgement and rapid response to the views of trainees. Through regular surveys of trainees' views and the effective representation of trainees on programme committees, the university ensures that it is meeting the needs of its trainees and responding to their concerns. The partnership recognised that it was making insufficient use of mentors to support the progress of trainees. It has responded well by providing good training for mentors supported by a handbook and exemplars of completed documentation. Mentors now also play a greater role in assessing applicants' specialist subject knowledge at the recruitment and selection stage. The partnership has responded well to the need to improve initial assessment and individual development planning. The individual development planning process has been strengthened to focus more clearly on development targets which more effectively challenge individual trainees. The university has identified that the proportion of trainees achieving the highest grade at the end of their programmes has not increased significantly and plans to focus more on ensuring that the most-able trainees are appropriately challenged.
22. Staff from across the partnership have good opportunities for continuous professional development which ensures they are aware of current local and national initiatives in the further education sector. The university offers its partners a wide range of staff development topics, including behaviour management, innovation, creativity and enterprise, e-safety and assessment for individual development planning. Several staff are registered on higher-level courses to develop their own knowledge and skills, and many have taken up opportunities for secondment to the university or to partner colleges. Programme coordinators are kept well informed of developments. The university is an active member of a number of local and regional groups in the further education and training sector including the South West Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training. It has close links with local universities, colleges and other relevant organisations, and is currently engaged in work with a wider consortium to develop teacher training for work-based-learning providers.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

City College Plymouth
Cornwall College
Exeter College
Petroc
Somerset College
South Devon College
Truro and Penwith 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?		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

		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 November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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