

Merseyside and Cheshire Graduate Teacher Programme Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Unique reference number	70228
Inspection number	373062
Inspection dates	19–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Bowles 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. Merseyside and Cheshire Graduate Teacher Programme Consortium was established in 2002 and received accreditation in 2005. The partnership consists of nine local authorities, two universities and, in 2011/12, approximately 42 schools serving a wide range of communities. The provider offers employment-based routes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS). In 2011/12 there are 22 trainees on the primary course and 20 trainees on the secondary course. The secondary shortage subjects of mathematics, science, information and communication technology, religious education, and design and technology are offered currently alongside other non-shortage subjects.

A commentary on the provision

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
 - the professional attributes shown by the trainees, particularly their proactive approach to their training, which are outstanding overall
 - the very effective commitment of partners to work together so that trainees have high quality training and good opportunities to apply what they have learned
 - good quality recruitment and selection arrangements which ensure the trainees have the potential to become good or outstanding teachers
 - the rigorous assessment practice which has ensured that trainees are securely realising their potential to become good or outstanding teachers
 - trainees' and schools' high levels of satisfaction, reflected through high retention and employment rates.

Required actions

5. There are no aspects of provision which require action.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - increase trainees' understanding of how to progress to the next level of performance by building on improvements in target setting, ensuring that the targets set focus on learning and progress of pupils or students, rather than on tasks for trainees to complete.
7. In order to improve consistency in the quality of training across the partnership, the provider should:
 - ensure that all new school based trainers and those providing a second school placement benefit from support specific to their needs by building on the existing strengths of networking and support.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Trainees' attainment is outstanding overall. Many positive features were observed during the inspection, including trainees' responsible approach to their training. They reflect thoughtfully on their achievements and make the most of extensive training opportunities. This is because the programme effectively encourages trainees to evaluate and plan a personal journey towards meeting the standards. Trainees form very good working relationships with their colleagues and create a positive climate for learning in their classrooms. They plan with a clear focus on objectives for learning and make engaging, purposeful use of a variety of approaches to learning. They make productive use of resources, including modern technology. Both primary and secondary trainees show good awareness of how to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Primary trainees are thoroughly prepared to teach synthetic phonics and early reading. This is because they have highly effective training and good opportunities to see and try a range of practice. Trainees have strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and many use them confidently. The trainees who have made the best progress now use a range of assessment methods which motivate pupils and promote their understanding. These trainees plan effectively for the different needs of pupils or students in their classes.
9. Inspectors' judgements of trainees compare closely with those of the provider. However, there are some weaker features evident in less secure trainees. These include less effective planning for assessment and progression by all groups of pupils, so that the pace of learning sometimes falters, and less searching evaluation of the lessons they have taught so that improvement is less rapid. Some trainees were not clear enough about what they need to improve to move up to the next performance grade.
10. Arrangements for recruitment and selection are good. Trainees with a wide range of prior experience feel welcomed and supported to tackle their needs from the start of the course. This results in above average retention rates and employment following the course. However, the recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups is below average. Sharper clarification of subject knowledge and relevant experience has led to more precise planning for individual needs. Subject specialists are now involved in the selection of secondary trainees and carry out useful pre-course research. There is now more careful planning for trainees to make the transition from acting as a teaching assistant to being responsible for a whole class.
11. The extent to which training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential is good. It has improved notably in some key respects. Training provided centrally is carefully aligned with, and responsive to, national priorities. Current and recent trainees respond with high satisfaction. This was seen, for example, at an event during the inspection hosted by a leading literacy school which inspired trainees and equipped them with high quality resources. Clearer expectations for a 'common core' entitlement of school based training

have been set. The very effective collaboration between partnership schools has led to good opportunities for trainees to see different practice in more than one setting and to try out approaches in their classrooms. The impact was clear, for example, in a mathematics lesson in which a trainee seamlessly incorporated literacy skills. Trainees capably discussed how they develop their pupils' skills in phonics, speaking and listening, and literacy. They explained how the methods they have learned enable them to support a wide range of additional needs.

12. School-based training is good. The weekly cycle of observed teaching, reflection and a review of targets is consistently and effectively followed. Identified gaps in trainees' subject knowledge are clearly linked to their very individual training plans. Many good and some very effective opportunities for training are being used to fulfil these plans. The work of the best trainees shows the effect of high expectations, strong role models and complementary experiences of different approaches. Schools work together very effectively to ensure a valuable second placement and shorter additional placements. Good communications between school based trainers lead to clear, focused expectations which make the additional experience significant and challenging.
13. Assessment practice has improved in rigour and this is driving improvements in trainees' progress. Trainers, and virtually all trainees, have a clear understanding of what counts as good teaching and learning. This results from the quality of significant dialogue about assessment involving the consortium's quality assurance tutors. Moderation of feedback following joint observations and evaluation of other evidence takes place before three review points. Agreed criteria for grading and consortium moderation meetings also contribute fully to the good level of shared understanding. As a result, trainees know what they have achieved. However, they are not always clear about what they need to do better in order to reach the next grade of performance. Target setting, despite improvements, is sometimes still too narrowly focused on, for example, teaching an unfamiliar topic rather than on understanding the concepts needed to teach it effectively. Targets do not always make clear enough how to plan for and evaluate the impact of recommended strategies and some focus on tasks for trainees to complete rather than improving pupils' learning.
14. The use made of available resources is good. The provider uses the human resources of its partnership particularly effectively to provide high quality central training and good school based training opportunities. Trainees have access to good resources in schools, plenty of additional courses and relevant materials through web links. They experience teaching in different socio-economic contexts but some are less well prepared to teach in multi-cultural settings because they have limited opportunities for practical experience. The investment in quality assurance tutors is having a significantly positive impact on consistency.
15. The consistency of the quality of provision across the partnership is good, marking a further improvement since the previous inspection. Some aspects are outstanding, including the very effective commitment of partners to work together flexibly so that trainees have high quality, personalised training and support. Communications are very effective. The clear documentation, regular

purposeful meetings and prompt, helpful responses of the consortium's management and administration to any difficulties are praised universally. All parties have worked together successfully to achieve greater consistency. Schools welcome the close relationship they have with their quality assurance tutor because it helps them accelerate their trainees' progress. Commenting on the unflinching written feedback on the training plan and evidence of achievement, one said approvingly, 'There is no hiding place from rigorous quality assurance arrangements'.

16. School based trainers from the trainees' lead and second schools communicate very effectively to plan valuable experiences and set clear targets for their trainees. However, trainers from the second school and some new trainers are less confident about their responsibilities because they have not been included so effectively in briefings.
17. The way in which equality of opportunity is promoted, diversity is valued, and harassment and unlawful discrimination are being eliminated is good. In terms of representation, the proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups remains stubbornly low, although mature trainees are relatively well represented. In case studies, there is much evidence that training is personalised effectively with no significant variation in outcomes for different groups. Currently, a very small proportion of trainees who are causing concern have action plans to enable them to meet the required standards by the end of the course. The equal opportunities policy has been updated and is being more effectively implemented. A stronger emphasis on equal opportunities and diversity in training is reflected in trainees' growing understanding of the practical steps they can take. For example, some trainees explained how they have built on their students' limited understanding of English or discussed parents' worries about a child being teased about their sexuality.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

18. The extent to which the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvement and/or sustain high quality is good. Monitoring and evaluation of the provision have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Assessment practice is accurate, with good supporting evidence. The monitoring of all aspects of provision is thorough and evaluation is now more rigorous. The consortium's wealth of data has been better used to plan for and evaluate specific improvements, with benefit to the outcomes of trainees.
19. Leaders and managers continue to be responsive to the views of stakeholders. They have monitored and refined the effectiveness of recruitment and selection processes. The key changes since the previous inspection are that assessment practice is more rigorous and that data have been used more systematically.

20. All parties have a more secure understanding of the characteristics of outstanding performance as a result of more rigorous moderation arrangements. Discussions about what constitutes 'good' or 'outstanding' have raised expectations considerably. At first this led to fewer trainees being graded as outstanding. However, the proportion is steadily growing as a result of better progress, resulting from more effective training. Trainees' progress is assessed accurately and tracked carefully. Any gaps or differences are analysed to inform the provider's self-evaluation. Data are interrogated to investigate the effect of provision on different groups of trainees and on their achievement in different areas of the standards.
21. The improvements in the consistency of quality across the partnership have flowed from more thorough quality assurance processes, which are well linked to professional development for school based trainers. Schools find the regular visits from quality assurance tutors probing, corrective and supportive, and extra visits are arranged if required. Quality assurance leaders' reports and other evidence are reviewed by a management committee which involves trainees and school representatives. This group has a clearer picture of strengths and weaknesses in the primary and secondary areas of provision, which has in turn informed more precise priorities for improvement.
22. The improvement plan is now more clearly focused on improving trainees' progress and outcomes. Changes, where needed, have followed because the working parties have swiftly tackled identified gaps and tightened processes. Clearer success criteria which set out expected outcomes have enabled leaders and managers to measure the impact of change. As a result, the provider's self-evaluation document gives an accurate picture of ongoing improvement.
23. The quality of training has improved in key areas, with greater impact on trainees' progress. This is notably evident in aspects of trainees' knowledge and understanding which the consortium had accurately identified as more challenging. The effective emphasis on literacy, numeracy, special educational needs and behaviour management has had a good impact on the understanding and skills of both primary and secondary trainees. Improvements have been made in preparing trainees to teach in a diverse society, although this is work in progress. A significant element of this training has been thoughtfully re-shaped. Importantly, this is not a one-off event but carefully linked to other aspects of training. Trainees have a secure and growing awareness of their responsibilities.
24. The response to national initiatives and to changes at a more local level is good. Local partnerships have been developed by the provider with particularly effective use of the expertise of local authorities and schools to enhance the taught course. The provider has a clear understanding of local shortages and the potential of local applicants, which has enabled it to sustain high rates for employment. This is particularly true for those mature applicants who are making a career change or developing their career. Some of these trainees state that they would be unable to use other routes to qualified teacher status (QTS).
25. The effectiveness of the provider in planning improvement is good. The effect of new developments in training has been monitored and evaluated more

rigorously through trainees' feedback and closer scrutiny of evidence of the impact on trainees' progress in relevant standards.

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

		Employment-based routes
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	1
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

		Employment-based routes
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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