

Birmingham Advisory and Support Services

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by two of 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 Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS) offers a primary and secondary employment-based route into teaching for graduate trainees. Following a phased change of management in 2009/10, the BASS programme was re-situated into the Health Education Service division of Birmingham City Council. A new programme manager took full responsibility for the training programme in September 2010 and the number of tutors was reduced from 21 to five in September 2011. The management group has been expanded to include headteachers and representatives from partnership schools and one of the city's academies. The programme enjoys a strong reputation locally with well over half of trainees appointed to Birmingham schools at the end of their training. In 2011, 82% of trainees had gained employment by September.
4. At the time of the inspection there were 24 primary trainees, including one specialising in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. There were

10 secondary trainees, including two specialising in mathematics, two in English, one in drama, three in physical education, one in science and one in health and social care. Trainees are allocated advisory staff as tutors and complete a regular weekly programme of centre-based training. They are supervised in school by a School Based Trainer Mentor (SBTM).

Provision in the employment – based route to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
 - self-motivated, reflective trainees who demonstrate good professional attributes and are highly committed to their own professional development
 - the rich diversity of the extended partnership which ensures trainees benefit from a wide range of contrasting training experiences
 - consistently good quality primary school-based mentoring, high-quality feedback and regular developmental targets which support trainees' progress and enable trainees to achieve good levels of attainment
 - the high proportion of trainees who gain employment in local schools
 - the good quality of personal support offered by the programme manager, tutors, and mentoring staff to ensure trainees well-being.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - strengthen procedures to quality assure the work of school-based trainers to resolve inconsistencies in practice so that all trainees are assessed accurately and benefit from high-quality training in school
 - consider earlier assessment points during the first term so that secondary trainees can be given timely support to help them develop their subject-specific pedagogy in greater depth
 - ensure that the improved data collection procedures are used fully to evaluate the impact of recruitment and selection strategies.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the Birmingham Advisory and Support Service GTP in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Although the provider has graded the overall attainment of trainees as outstanding, inspectors have judged it to be good because sometimes the assessment of trainees is over-generous. Nevertheless, since the last inspection there has been a clear trend of improving outcomes with nearly all trainees making good progress from their starting points. All aspects of the partnership's work are now judged to be good. This improvement is due to an improved programme structure and quality assurance procedures, coupled with the dedication and determination of all those involved to ensure that high-quality teacher training is accessible to those who wish to pursue a teaching career, particularly within the Birmingham area.

8. Trainees achieve good levels of attainment because they are committed to their own professional development and are reflective in their practice. Many take effective risks in their teaching and use innovative methods, such as drama and role play, to enhance learning. The pace of learning is good because sessions are well-planned to meet the needs of different abilities. Trainees quickly establish productive relationships with pupils and staff colleagues. They willingly participate in all aspects of school life, such as drama productions and extra-curricular activities. Clear procedures and course documentation underpin the regular tracking and assessment of trainees' progress. The fortnightly lesson observations and feedback from mentors are used well to identify focused targets for development. Nevertheless, there is a slight over-inflation of attainment judgements and some inconsistencies in assessment for a few trainees.
9. The provider meets local and regional employment needs effectively and is successful in achieving recruitment targets related to age, gender and diversity, which are above the regional and national averages. The completion rates for primary trainees indicate good-quality recruitment procedures. A relatively high number of trainees withdrew early from the secondary training route in 2010/11 and, as a consequence, recruitment procedures have been refined. The focus on personalised learning is a strong feature of the provision with trainees referring to a 'tailored approach to the programme'.
10. A key strength is the coherence between centre-based and school-based training. The weekly centre-based training sessions generate valuable tasks for trainees to undertake in their placement schools in order to consolidate and develop their learning, for example in relation to different teaching techniques. When tutors visit trainees in schools, they identify further training needs and these are addressed well in subsequent central training sessions. All central training is highly regarded by trainees. They value sessions where expertise from tutors, local authority advisors and associate lecturers is shared. The trainees also appreciate the training they receive in schools from staff with particular expertise, such as in teaching phonics or supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In some subjects such as physical education, advanced skills teachers are used well to support the trainees. However, interventions to support weaker trainees who are struggling with subject-specific pedagogy are not always as swift as they could be.
11. Training to teach early reading and phonics is good with an effective balance of centre-based and school-based input. Trainees who specialise in teaching Key Stage 2 pupils are required to undertake an additional week of training in a Key Stage 1 class and all primary trainees are observed and assessed teaching phonics. Consequently, trainees develop a secure knowledge and understanding of how to use systematic phonics to teach early reading and writing. The focus on phonics also enables the secondary trainees to develop a good understanding of the importance of literacy to underpin learning. Training to support disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs has sharpened trainees' knowledge and understanding. Trainees benefit from the expertise and input of staff from special schools both in central training sessions and in a carefully structured two-day visit to a local special school. This enables trainees to

enhance their understanding of special needs issues and of multi-agency working, and to develop strategies in behaviour management and in planning to meet individual needs. Training in behaviour management is also effective with trainees adopting 'top tips' from the centre-based training sessions and implementing individualised support for behaviour management.

12. Staff from partnership schools demonstrate high levels of commitment and enthusiasm for the training programme. Good-quality training for mentors is well timed and effectively supports their confidence in making judgements. The triangulated observations undertaken by school-based mentors and the team of well-informed centre-based tutors reflect good practice and help to promote consistency. Of particular note is the joint observation undertaken by tutors from their base school and from their second placement school, which trainees consider to be supportive and reassuring. Schools are strongly committed to the partnership with BASS and play an active role in driving improvement. For example, following feedback to the provider during the past academic year, the trainees are now better prepared to teach phonics. Local headteachers view their involvement in initial teacher education as an important professional development opportunity for their teachers. Teaching staff often aspire to the role of mentor, a good number of whom have gained qualified teacher status through BASS. Nevertheless, in a very small minority of schools the quality of training is not as effective as it could be. This happens when a mentor takes on the role reluctantly, leaves unexpectedly or is overloaded by other commitments. Schools report that communication with the provider has improved, is now prompt and any issues or inconsistencies are addressed quickly. They are kept well informed through newsletters and emails.
13. Although the quality, deployment, and use of resources across the partnership were judged by the partnership to be outstanding, inspectors judge them to be good. Resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to meet trainees' individual needs and this has a positive impact on trainees' progress and attainment. Trainees confirm that they have good access to the human and physical resources they need from schools, tutors and from the local authority's learning resource centre but there is no virtual learning environment. At the start of the academic year, course documentation was streamlined for efficiency but there is still an over-reliance on vast quantities of paperwork to demonstrate how effectively the trainee has met the standards required for qualified teacher status. Nevertheless, trainees make good use of the Professional Development Journal (PDJ) for professional reflection.
14. The provider judged the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity as outstanding. Inspectors noted some outstanding features but judged it to be good overall. The outstanding features include the way in which the partnership values and respects diversity, and shows a dedicated commitment to promoting inclusion and equal opportunities, through the promotion of equal and fair access to training for all trainees. Many trainees have worked as teaching assistants or non-qualified teachers and this programme is enabling them to achieve their long-term ambition to become a teacher. Trainees are extremely well-prepared to teach pupils from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds because they are provided with ample opportunities to gain the necessary

practical experience. This includes the effective use of contrasting placements for trainees' second school experience. All trainees praise the support they are offered by staff and feel able to raise any concerns in the secure knowledge they will be efficiently and professionally dealt with. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring for a small number of trainees which results in inequality of opportunity for these individuals.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

15. Since the last inspection, the partnership has continued to grow and develop. There is a clear ethos of continuous improvement with careful consideration to changing trends in initial teacher education. The partnership has good capacity to sustain high-quality outcomes for trainees, and to take the actions required to secure improvements where necessary. Key strengths identified at the last inspection have been sustained and enhanced. The recommendations from the last inspection have been successfully addressed and there have been a number of improvements, including a more rigorous approach to evaluation and development planning.
16. The partnership rigorously monitors and evaluates its own effectiveness, although some of its judgements need further refinement in order to provide a more accurate match to the grade criteria. The well-respected programme manager ensures that a full range of partners are involved in self-evaluation. Central and school-based training are monitored closely by tutors. Wide-ranging evaluation data are collected from tutors and schools. Trainees report that they have a voice and feel listened to. Consequently, the actions taken to improve provision and outcomes for trainees are well devised and successful. This is exemplified well by the trend of improvement in trainees' attainment, notably in their behaviour management, their confidence in teaching phonics and their secure knowledge and understanding of meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
17. The partnership analyses a wide range of formal trainee evaluations about their training and placement experience, and makes changes to the provision as necessary. For example, in response to suggestions from trainees and school-based mentors during the last academic year, the provider has increased the course content on the teaching of phonics and early reading skills. All stakeholders are represented on the management group and their views provide well-focused challenge. Consultations are held regularly and there is a swift response to issues raised. For example, following feedback from the primary consultative group of trainees, action was taken to realign the timings of the completion dates for assignments. The external examiner's report is of good quality and offers useful recommendations for improvement.
18. Since the last inspection, the partnership has made increasing use of data to inform the self-evaluation and improvement cycle. Following the high withdrawal rate of secondary trainees in 2010/11, the recruitment process has been

carefully evaluated and improvements have been made as a result of feedback. For example, a detailed analysis of the secondary provision has led to a reduction in the number of subjects offered and individual support programmes are offered for trainees causing concern. Nevertheless, the data has yet to be used to best effect to inform trends in recruitment and selection systems.

19. The partnership's anticipation of, and response to change are good. There are numerous examples of how effectively leaders have planned for significant organisational changes, including a reduction in staffing and a change of venue. The partnership has very close links with the local authority with the result that managers and leaders have a clear understanding of local needs. The training programme meets local needs very well and provides a pathway into teaching largely for local people, most of whom have been employed previously as teaching assistants or unqualified teachers. Headteachers interviewed during the inspection were fulsome in their praise of the quality of trainees recruited. They are keen to employ trainees from BASS because the trainees understand the local context and contribute well to the development needs of local schools. One headteacher described the programme as an effective 'apprenticeship into the profession'. The partnership is effective in ensuring that trainees have a good knowledge and understanding of national initiatives and this has a positive impact on trainees' development. For example, in response to a growing need to train more teachers who are confident in teaching disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, a short placement in a special school has been introduced for all trainees.
20. The provider accurately identifies suitable priorities for development and the improvement plan provides a well-conceived strategy for addressing these. The good communication across the partnership and the high level of involvement of school-based colleagues in partnership activities, including mentor training, ensure that all partners are aware of their role in securing required improvements. Monitoring, evaluation and review are well embedded into the improvement planning process to ensure that the impact of actions on trainees' outcomes is analysed carefully and used to raise trainees' achievement further.

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?	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

		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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