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Mr John Allen  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Allen

**Ofsted inspection of ITE provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications in the lifelong learning/further education sector**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your provision between 1-4 May 2012, for the time given to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and to a published national overview report. This report will identify the overall quality of provision leading to Awarding Body qualifications and identify the overall strengths and areas for development. However, in line with previous practice, inspectors will not make graded judgements of the quality of the provision in each centre; they will evaluate and feed back identified strengths and any points for further development. These are outlined below for your centre.

The published overview report will list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

**Outcomes for trainees**

Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) courses, offered as an introduction to further education teacher training, are well-subscribed and successful. They are valued by trainees and employers as a solid foundation for progression to further training. Recruitment to the Certificate in teaching in the lifelong learning sector (CTLLS) courses has almost doubled in the current year. Retention and success rates on these courses are generally above those of similar courses nationally. Success rates for trainees completing the two-year Diploma in teaching in the lifelong learning sector (DTLLS) course are broadly in line; although retention rates vary between courses delivered on different sites of the college.



There are no significant differences in outcomes for trainees employed by external organisations and those employed by the college. Almost all of those retained in the training complete achieve their qualification.

Good quality advice and guidance ensures that trainees are steered to relevant courses that are appropriate to their teaching role. There is good continuing professional development available for trainees who are employed by the college. Trainees' readily share new ideas and good practice in the workplace. Consequently, they contribute well to the continuing professional development of others in their specialist teams. The college has many examples of relatively recently qualified staff talking on extra responsibilities and gaining rapid promotion. College systems track the progress of staff gaining Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status (QTLS) but there is no formal tracking of the progression of recently qualified trainees external to the college.

Most trainees make good progress overall. They grow in confidence and competence in the supportive environment of the central training. In group sessions they benefit from the diversity of experience of their peers and the good practice often modelled by their trainers. Working relationships between trainees and their students are generally positive and productive. Trainees understand the importance of establishing boundaries for expected standards of behaviour with younger learners. They engage enthusiastically in professional dialogue on the impact of teachers actions on students' learning and on standards of behaviour. Nevertheless, a minority of year one trainees on the Diploma route feel that strategies to promote high standards of behaviour are not given sufficient focus at an early stage in the course.

Although they receive good support from their trainers overall, trainees' ability to cope with the academic level required in written assignments and to reflect on their own learning and practice is variable. In one good example, the trainee applied much thought to the impact of their teaching on students' learning. They gave careful consideration to the links between theory and their own practice, particularly in relation to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Trainees are mindful of the need to plan their lessons carefully to engage students' interest and ensure they challenge them to achieve their full potential. They are skilful in the use of information learning technology to promote deeper understanding of key concepts. They readily test out new ideas and use their own original resources to motivate students and improve their interest in learning. Trainees can cite examples of where they have been confident to take calculated risks, for example in the use of discovery learning, to improve their practice. However, the awarding body qualification structure potentially inhibits the extent to which they can reflect on their progress as a continuum from their starting point through to the successful completion of the course.

Trainees develop a good understanding of the importance of addressing equality and diversity through their teaching. In one good example of the application of theory to



practice the trainee explained how, in response to an inappropriate comment, the focus of the lesson was changed to address the issue, confident that the time spent on this could be made up later and that the diversion was beneficial to all students in the class. Similarly, the course equips trainees with an appropriate awareness of the need to address functional English and mathematics in the context of their specialist subject. However, the application of this knowledge to their practice is inconsistent.

Teacher trainers provide good generic support for trainees through the central training. Trainees' access to subject-specialist support in the workplace and on their practical teaching is informal, for example through peer groups, and consequently of variable quality. There is no requirement for trainees to receive specific feedback on their teaching in the context of their specialist subject. The teacher training team are responsive, reflective and offer high levels of personal and professional guidance. Trainees' progress is monitored regularly. Feedback from trainers is helpful and supportive. However, developmental targets arising from observed practice and written assignments are not always sharply focused on learning and what the trainee needs to do to continue to improve. There is further scope to use the information gathered on trainees' prior experience more efficiently. For example, to better inform the analysis of different starting points, planning individual learning, and in providing a deeper understanding of the progress trainees make over time. The provider's self assessment of the quality of provision is generally accurate with a clear identification of the priorities for improvement, but needs a sharper focus on the impact of actions taken on outcomes for trainees and the value added by the training.

### **The key strengths are:**

- trainees' good knowledge of their specialist area which is used well to engage students and motivate them to succeed
- the good progress, confidence and competence trainees make as a result of the training
- trainees' good focus on the promotion of good behaviour to support learning in their lessons
- the good personal support from the responsive and accessible teacher training team.
- the overall accuracy of self-assessment and identification of priorities for further improvement.

### **The key areas for development are:**

- strengthen trainees' access to consistently high-quality specialist support to address the subject-specific aspects of their teaching practice
- encourage trainees to develop a continuum of reflective practice to evaluate and help them to improve the impact of their teaching on their own students' learning



- improve the monitoring of trainees' progress by setting consistently sharp and challenging developmental targets that focus on learning
- further develop self-assessment, through a deeper analysis of the progress trainees make, to better inform planning for improvement and establish a clearer understanding of the value-added as a result of the training.

As explained in the inspection guidance, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Christine Dick**

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

