

York St John University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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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. York St John University provides a variety of routes for initial teacher education leading to qualifications to teach in the primary and secondary sectors. The secondary phase was judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2011. Therefore, this phase was not included in this inspection and does not form part of this report.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

4. The provider gained university status in October 2006. Originally founded as a Church of England teacher training college in 1841, the provider now works in partnership with 450 schools, including those in rural and inner-city areas, faith schools and Early Years settings. In addition, the provider works in partnership with settings other than schools (SOTs), including museums, libraries, stately homes, National Trust properties, National Parks, outdoor centres and field study centres. Undergraduate primary trainees are also offered the opportunity of placements in an international setting.
5. The provider offers a three year undergraduate route leading to, on successful completion, the award of the BA (Honours) degree in Primary Education. There were 412 trainees on this route at the time of this inspection. The provider also operates a postgraduate programme with full-time and part-time routes. In total, 212 trainees were following these two routes, combined during this inspection.

Key strengths

6. The key strengths are:
 - the rigour and urgency with which leaders have addressed the issues raised at the June 2011 inspection
 - the outstanding centre-based training in phonics and early reading and writing, which enables trainees to plan lessons which ensure their pupils can make good progress in their learning
 - the good quality trainees who, because they continue to display good professional attributes, increasingly reflect on the impact of their teaching on the learning of their pupils and, as a result, have high expectations of themselves and their pupils
 - the way both human and physical resources have led to improvements in the attainment of trainees and the capacity of leaders to enhance provision further
 - the strong communication within the partnership relating to trainee strengths and areas for development, as a result of the improvements in the synthesis of data and the work of the highly respected link tutors
 - the strong levels of timely, effective and personalised support given to trainees.

Recommendations

7. In order to enhance the now good and growing capacity of the provider and improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
 - build on the commitment to high quality training demonstrated by partner organisations by:

- involving them more in the design and evaluation of the partnership action plan
 - sharing with them the findings of any evaluations undertaken
 - providing feedback to them about how effective they are as trainers
- improve the quality of action plans by making the success criteria sharper so it is clear exactly what these plans are to achieve.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees continues to be good. The attainment of trainees is good and continues to be accurately assessed. All groups of trainees achieve well. A key strength identified in the June 2011 inspection was the good quality trainees who displayed good professional attributes and became reflective professionals with high expectations of themselves and their pupils. This remains a key strength.
9. Typical characteristics of trainees include their developing use of a range of strategies to assess the learning of their pupils. Trainees use this information increasingly well to plan the next steps of learning. Trainees also display an excellent understanding of phonics, early reading and writing. As a consequence, they can plan series of lessons in the different phases. Trainees develop positive relationships with their pupils, and use a range of strategies to promote good behaviour very effectively. In addition, trainees in the Early Years Foundation Stage produce good quality learning journals which capture well the progress of individual children in terms of their learning and development. Trainees are also increasingly adept at using pupils' work as their starting points, asking precise questions of their pupils, making good use of clear success criteria, and working with teaching assistants to support the learning of their pupils. Schools appreciate the way trainees engage in the wider aspects of school life, for example, by leading acts of collective worship, assisting in the planning of risk assessments for educational visits, and through extra-curricular activities ranging from sporting to gardening clubs. As a result of improvement in provision, particularly on the postgraduate course, more trainees are assessed accurately to be at an outstanding level at the point of qualifying.
10. The extent to which recruitment and selection arrangements support high quality outcomes is good and ensures trainees are on the right courses. Completion rates are high. The only 'blot on the landscape' of this aspect of the provider's work is the low rates of recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the provider is determined in its resolve to improve this and has appointed key personnel to oversee this work. While applications from prospective trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds are up on the undergraduate course for 2012/13, it is too soon to see the impact of these appointments. The interview procedures on both the undergraduate and postgraduate courses have been revised, with partnership schools appreciating even more opportunities to share in the selection processes. On the part-and

full-time postgraduate routes, prospective trainees are set a challenge of teaching their peers a concept in 10 minutes. One example of this is teaching the football offside rule. Partnership schools view such tasks as rigorous. The information gained at interview is synthesised well by the recently appointed assessment managers and, through individual training plans, for example, enables the trainees to hit the ground running when they begin their courses.

11. Training, assessment and provision across the partnership are good. The partnership comprises a good range of schools and settings. The provider assures quality well, by taking account of inspection outcomes and local knowledge, for example, in order that trainees benefit from a range of experiences in contrasting placements. Communication is strong and a key strength. Highly respected link tutors play a key role in ensuring that the improved synthesis of data keeps partners aware of trainees' strengths and areas for development. An enhancement to the partnership is the establishment of a small number of clusters of schools. Within these pilot arrangements, in which greater accountability for training is devolved to schools, trainees and mentors benefit from bespoke workshops, such as those preparing trainees in phonics and guided reading, in assessment and in behaviour management. While these are relatively new, not all schools in the wider partnership are aware of their existence. This means they and their trainees are not benefiting from any lessons learned.
12. Key strengths identified in June 2011 relating to centre-based training in English and mathematics, the support and challenge given by academic tutors, and the feedback given to trainees following the completion of assignments remain strengths now and in some cases have been enhanced. A most noticeable enhancement and a key strength is the outstanding centre-based training in phonics and early reading and writing. This is enabling trainees to evaluate the learning pupils are making when, for example, blending sounds, recognising print, and attempting to use tricky spellings in their writing. Trainees are articulate in describing the different phases in the teaching of phonics and the implications it has for them in their teaching. They recognise, for example, the scope of teaching letters and sounds beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
13. The promotion of good pupil behaviour and ensuring that the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are met are given high priority at the centre and in schools. Trainees are provided with good opportunities to experience both the key stages before and after their main focus and these have, for example, enabled them to see how the learning of pupils progresses over time. Trainees' increasing confidence in understanding the difficulties some pupils may experience in their learning is enhanced by their understanding of the importance of making reference to any individual education plans, and ensuring teaching assistants are clear in what is expected of them.
14. Courses across all routes enable trainees to cover in depth the features of the National Curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage, depending on their

chosen specialism. Consistency in the quality of mentoring continues to improve. There is greater rigour in training with good attendance at meetings. Specific training for mentors, for example, that relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage, is ensuring mentors are increasingly sharp in their focus on the standards for the award of qualified teacher status, particularly professional attributes, the criteria for judging trainees' progress, and the progress pupils are making in the lessons trainees teach.

15. The accuracy of assessment of trainees' progress is enhanced by the roles of different personnel combining together well and complementing each other's work. Academic tutors, link tutors, centre-based subject leaders and mentors all support trainees very well and ensure they make the most of the opportunities afforded them. Where difficulties arise, be it personal or course related, support is timely, effective and personalised. Examples of such support which enables trainees to get back on track include one-to-one support in writing assignments and developing subject knowledge. Such support is a key strength.
16. The partnership is not restricted to schools. Trainees on the undergraduate course benefit from placements at SOTs, for example, at outdoor education and learning centres, museums, galleries, forest schools and a cemetery. Trainees benefit greatly from such placements, in identifying ways in which pupils may be inspired to learn, for example, through dressing up as Tudors. Further benefits identified by trainees and former trainees include the recognition of the impact such learning has on pupils' social and emotional development. Such settings and their impact demonstrate why the use of resources has improved and is outstanding. It, too, is a key strength.
17. Facilities at the university are impressive. New, dedicated rooms model primary classrooms very well. Resource banks have improved significantly since the last inspection and there are impressive numbers of high quality books and story sacks, for example, to loan out in school placements. Resources for information and communication technology, mathematics and science are rightly held in high regard by trainees. Materials to support the teaching of phonics and early reading and writing are used very well. In terms of human resources, the appointment of external mentors in a few schools has been very well received as it has enabled schools to take on additional trainees without overstressing their capacity to do so. Significant improvements in the way placements have been organised have meant the placements have been timely and targeted well to trainees' needs and experience.
18. The extent to which the provision promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and eliminates harassment and unlawful discrimination has improved since the June 2011 inspection and is now judged to be good. Previous concerns relating to the full-time postgraduate course have been resolved. Trainees across all courses benefit from trainers who know their trainees' needs well and personalise their training accordingly. Both current and former trainees reported how much they benefited from extended placements, which enhance their

knowledge and understanding of pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. The evaluations of diversity week are rightly positive and report trainees' increased awareness, for example, of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Trainees are confident in recognising and reporting any incidents, including those of a racist or homophobic nature should they occur.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

19. The provider's capacity to secure improvement is good. The rigour and urgency with which leaders have addressed the issues raised at the June 2011 inspection have been key strengths. Impressive improvements made by the provider, not least in its increased capacity to improve, have ensured that previous strengths have been at least maintained.
20. At the previous inspection the provider was asked to address two required actions: first, to review the full-time postgraduate course to ensure all trainees received their full entitlement in all aspects of the training; and second, to ensure leaders and managers had an overview of data collection, to enable the provider to synthesise data, identify trends and inform improvement planning, so that it has a significant impact on trainee outcomes. The reorganisation of partnership office arrangements has ensured postgraduate trainees now benefit from timely placements. They also have good opportunities, through specific placements, for example, to gain experience of the diverse needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. For most postgraduate trainees, the placement of a trainee in the same school for first and second school experiences is beneficial. The provider is considering whether it is appropriate for all trainees. The appointment of assessment managers has enabled link and academic tutors to track the progress trainees are making in school and on their courses more effectively. Strengths and areas for support are now more readily identified. The impact of this work has been positive, as demonstrated by the improving trend of trainees being assessed accurately as outstanding.
21. The provider was also asked to consider four recommendations. Good progress has been made in these areas. First, the training of mentors is leading to greater consistency across all placements for all trainees; this is particularly evident for mentors supporting trainees in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A relative weakness in the training of mentors is the lack of differentiation, to take into account the experience of some and the inexperience of others. Second, trainees, whatever course they are on, benefit from comparable patterns of school-based experience. Third, trainees on the upper primary course now have experience in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Fourth, mentors are increasingly focusing on the learning of pupils to ensure the feedback they give to trainees incorporates more consistently a clear focus on this element of observation and appraisal.

22. The effectiveness with which managers at all levels evaluate performance in order to improve or sustain high quality is good. The provider's assessment of its overall effectiveness and its ability to sustain improvements has been confirmed as accurate by this inspection. The provider seeks and acts upon the views of its stakeholders and external examiners and, as a result, schools are helping to shape the courses and partnership, through clusters for example. Link tutors quality assure workshops organised by these clusters; subject tutors quality assure the work of schools and trainees in English, mathematics and science. However, despite ongoing quality assurance events and evaluations throughout the year, there is scope to share findings with schools more often, to enhance their part in training. In addition, while mentors complete evaluations for the provider, a few mentors report that they do not receive any overview of the outcomes of such evaluations, or of the quality of their own school's work as a training partner.
23. Leadership at all levels continues to be good in anticipating change, and preparing for and responding to national and local initiatives. Partnership schools are acutely aware of the national priorities and their roles in achieving them. The provider is involved with a number of Teaching Schools around York and the region, in order to share expertise. The expertise the provider utilises is wide-ranging, including that of local authorities, external agencies, external examiners and staff, both permanent and seconded, who bring recent and relevant experience. Good use is also made of former trainees, for example, utilising Masters level research relating to boys and play fighting, and parental involvement in reading. The provider makes use of its own expertise effectively. Leaders in mathematics, for example, make use of the very effective teaching and learning strategies used for English and phonics.
24. The effectiveness with which the provider plans and takes action for improvement has improved and is good. A wide range of clear plans is in place for all aspects of the provider's work. These plans would benefit from sharper success criteria which identify exactly what is to be achieved. In addition, it would benefit the provider and the wider partnership if the members of the partnership were more fully involved in drawing up and evaluating its action plan. Nevertheless, the success of the plans is clear to all, as demonstrated by the improvements made since the last inspection a little over a year ago.

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

		Primary
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?	1
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

		Primary
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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