

# University of Sunderland

## 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. The University of Sunderland and its partnership with local schools and colleges provides a range of training in primary and secondary schooling leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) and to a variety of qualifications for those teaching, or planning to teach, in the further education sector.
4. All programmes were previously inspected in May 2011. Provision which was judged outstanding for both overall effectiveness and capacity to improve at the previous inspection will be not inspected during this year. For the University of Sunderland, the secondary phase of provision was judged to be outstanding for both overall effectiveness and capacity to improve. Therefore this phase was not included in this inspection and does not form part of this report. The inspection was of the primary provision, namely, the four-year undergraduate programme leading to Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons) with QTS and the one-year postgraduate programme (PGCE). It looked specifically at the impact of the

action taken by the university and its partnership in response to the required actions and recommendations arising from the inspection in 2011.

5. The university works with approximately 190 primary schools in 12 different local authorities to provide training in the 5 to 11 age range. The undergraduate programme offers enhancement in the teaching of Spanish and a range of option courses in the second and third year. The postgraduate programme offers enhancement in French. Those trainees who choose to specialise in the teaching of modern foreign languages spend some time teaching in a primary school in the respective country.
6. At the time of the inspection, there were 370 undergraduate and 32 postgraduate trainees. Three final-year undergraduate trainees were taking the enhanced programme in Spanish and five postgraduate trainees were taking primary French. Twenty third-year BA trainees were undertaking a 20-day placement in a special school as part of an optional project, funded by the Teaching and Development Agency (TDA).
7. The university has validated a new three-year BA (Hons) degree in primary education with QTS to replace the current four-year programme from September 2012. It is retaining optional modules, including modern foreign languages (MFL).

## Provision in the primary phase

### Key strengths

8. The key strengths are:
- motivated, reflective trainees who show commitment to helping children learn and to being effective practitioners
  - trainees' confidence and competence in working with pupils from diverse backgrounds and with differing needs, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
  - the successful innovation of theory-linked practice days (TPL days: days in schools when trainees work on specific aspects identified by them and/or trainers) to ensure that trainees have opportunities to practise and apply in school what they gain in centre-based training, with subsequent review and evaluation with school- and centre-based trainers
  - the good quality content of centre- and school-based training, especially that of option courses, projects and enhancements which give considerable depth to the training overall and enable trainees to develop areas of personal expertise
  - the continuing good quality personal and pastoral support for trainees through very good relationships and communication with trainers and easy access to good quality resources
  - the provider's effective response in lifting the quality of provision, especially in raising trainees' confidence in, and preparedness to teach, reading.

### Recommendations

9. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider/partnership should:
- refine the clarity and focus of targets, set by and with trainees, to ensure that the targets cover all aspects of trainees' professional development and identify clearly what trainees need to do and how
  - ensure a continual audit of trainees' experiences, targets and their progress in meeting them, in order to promote closer matching of context, activities and training experiences to individual needs
  - develop procedures to ensure the systematic assurance of the quality and impact of the wide range of work undertaken by trainers in their different roles, and increase the role of the Partnership Development Group in evaluating provision across the partnership and the impact of initiatives on outcomes for trainees
  - rationalise the documentation and unify the criteria and guidance relating to the assessment and recording of trainees' performance.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 2**

10. The positive impact of strong action from the provider has lifted the overall effectiveness to good. The quality of recruitment and selection has improved to good as has the use of resources; the promotion of equality and diversity remains good. Changes in recruitment and selection procedures in the past few years are resulting in higher succession and completion rates. Alterations to the timing of placements in the BA programme, the curriculum innovation module in the final BA year and the introduction of review weeks following placements and of TLP days throughout the year for all trainees, have strengthened the cohesion of the programmes. Trainees are in school more frequently and usefully applying what they gain from centre-based training. Retention of key knowledge, such as in the teaching of reading, is stronger. Trainees are making good progress overall and outcomes have improved, as have trainees' satisfaction ratings, particularly in respect of their preparedness to teach reading and their view of the training. The positive impact of training for mentors, in how to set targets with trainees to drive progress, is evident in better outcomes and in the improving quality of trainees' reflections on their own performance. However, there are inconsistencies in the range and specificity of targets, in the monitoring of trainees' progress in meeting them, and also in how mentors interpret performance grade criteria. The quality of training and assessment, and of the provision across the partnership, is judged to be now good.
11. Trainees' attainment is good on both programmes. Higher proportions of trainees, especially undergraduate trainees, were judged to be outstanding than in 2011 and no trainee was judged to be less than good. This gives the strongest profile of performance in the past few years. Progression rates are significantly higher, with very few undergraduate trainees not completing the current academic year and all postgraduates completing the programme successfully. Such improvements partly reflect the changes made in the past years to tighten procedures to select candidates with key personal as well as academic qualities. Fluent speakers of the target language now interview all those hoping to take an MFL enhanced route, and the involvement of practitioners in interviews has grown. The programmes continue to recruit a higher proportion than average of trainees with non-standard academic qualifications and data indicate that these trainees usually do well. The programmes also attract male trainees: taking the final year undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts as a whole, one in five is male, which is above average. While the proportion of minority ethnic trainees remains relatively low, a higher number than previously has been offered places for the programmes beginning in September 2012.
12. All trainees interviewed by inspectors showed strong professional attributes; they were committed to teaching and reflected critically on their experiences. All had either gained a teaching post, often in a school in the partnership, or were actively seeking one. They felt confident to teach primary pupils of any age, and to teach all subjects, although several had not yet taught one or more of the foundation subjects, most often music and physical education. As found

in 2011, trainees were less secure in knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 3, although able to relate what they had seen on visits to basic principles. Trainees were generally proud of their achievements; they had often worked successfully to strengthen their subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, and to develop effective skills in managing pupils' behaviour. They outlined the strategies that worked for them, and trainees who had taught in Spanish and French primary schools talked critically about the difference in approach seen there. Several trainees showed resilience in having stayed the course despite personal difficulties. For one postgraduate trainee, 'it was an even steeper learning curve than I had expected'. All were highly complimentary about the warm relationships with trainers, the often shared enthusiasm for teaching and subjects, and the ready support which boosted trainees' confidence at key times. Postgraduate trainees felt part of a family sharing experiences and ideas.

13. Drawing on experience from placements and the content of centre-based training, trainees talked confidently about teaching pupils from diverse social backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs. They ably suggested ways in which they would work with support staff, differentiate learning tasks, assess pupils' attainment and keep track of pupils' progress. Some had, however, limited knowledge of how schools use such tracking data to compare their effectiveness with other schools regionally and nationally.
14. Unlike the findings of the inspection in 2011, trainees showed confidence in, and sound knowledge of, how to teach phonics and reading, and often explained the need also to foster a love of reading. All had observed and taught phonics sessions and were aware of different schemes used by local schools. A small group of third year undergraduate trainees, working with autistic pupils in a special school, showed skill, flair and flexibility in teaching reading, leading guided reading and developing speech and language. They had carefully differentiated the task to meet individual needs and used singing, drama, kinaesthetic strategies and picture books to stimulate pupils' imagination. They used signs and symbols to interact with pupils and coped effectively with challenging behaviour. Their outstanding teaching reflected high-quality coaching and their ready willingness to act on advice. As a result, the trainees had made rapid progress in a short time.
15. Trainees commented that there is variability in the quality of mentoring in schools. They knew that they made best progress when working with mentors who combined praise with constructive criticism. Some trainees were unsure of their final grade because of the phrasing on report forms. Others had been unsure of what would have made a real difference to their performance because mentors were too positive. Scrutiny of trainees' files supported these views. Although the quality of targets and feedback showed improvement in the last year, for some trainees on final placement, the focus of a target remained much the same over some weeks, with little refinement. Targets often referred to professional skills only. Similarly, the evidence to support complex standards, such as teaching (Q25), was often just sufficient. Other trainees and mentors had agreed sharply worded targets that frequently crossed standards and

ensured that trainees made cumulative progress in all aspects of their professional development.

16. Overall, the quality of feedback was good, but showed inconsistency. Trainees' files showed instances of very detailed, comprehensive critiques of their teaching in lessons. However, the files contained insufficient comment on how trainees' teaching related to pupils' learning. Records of weekly reviews showed mentors and trainees identifying effective practice, links to the standards and points for improvement. Although link tutors sometimes commented on the quality of trainees' evaluations, mentors missed such opportunities to help trainees to develop their skills in critical reflection. Variation also typified the feedback on trainees' academic assignments. Where assignments were either pass or fail, trainers missed chances to indicate how trainees could strengthen the quality. In marked assignments, comments were often overly weighted to aspects of presentation rather than to the subject content. Comments on the need to develop criticality did not sit well with some high marks: a point also noted by external examiners. In contrast, the recent marking of the curriculum innovation projects of the Year 4 BA trainees gave comments against each criterion for the assignment, with clear feedback on content, presentation and quality of critical reflection. Several trainees identified the curriculum innovation module as the highlight of the BA programme as it allowed them to be creative in resolving an issue arising from their professional practice. The high quality of materials designed and produced by some trainees, and their fitness for purpose, indicated how well some trainees were willing to apply their knowledge and skills.
17. Trainees' satisfaction with their training is high. Postgraduate and BA trainees, from all years, talked positively about the wide range of experiences they had had, especially the focus days in schools, the input from specialist speakers, the chances to take part in projects and the 'brilliant' TLP days which gave them the chance, 'to try things out, to get to know schools and to see how it is done'. They particularly valued the practical approach in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) which gave them confidence to teach these subjects and to use new skills, such as creating podcasts and photomontages, in their assignments and in school.
18. As judged in the inspection of 2011, trainees are knowledgeable about aspects of equality and diversity. They referred to 'inspirational' sessions that alerted them to barriers to learning, including racism, homophobia and bullying. They were also aware of relevant safeguarding procedures at the centre, in schools and within the local authority. A particularly strong feature is the certificated training in e-safety for all trainees early in their training.
19. The actions to improve outcomes for trainees have resulted in more effective and efficient use of resources than previously. Well-reasoned decisions have been made about funding, such as providing training for mentors in regional clusters, or training for interested Year 2 BA trainees in signs and picture cues as used in special schools. The training in special needs prompted trainees to organise events to raise funds for a child with very specific needs. Trainers make good use of personal research and expertise in training sessions and



trainees value the time trainers give them over and above notional commitments. The link tutor role places high demands on time, especially in schools in unpaid partnership where the link tutor carries out observations and assessments. The decision for centre-based trainers to exchange places with some school-based trainers is a good step forward in providing reciprocal professional development as well as specialist input for trainees.

## **The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality** **Grade: 2**

20. The overall capacity for further improvement has strengthened to good since the previous inspection. The required actions from the inspection of 2011 have been met and much has been done, to good effect, to implement all the recommendations. The action to strengthen trainees' preparedness to teach reading has been particularly effective. Although trainees' performance and satisfaction ratings have risen, all leaders and trainers accept that there is much still to do to refine procedures and to ensure high-quality provision for all trainees. The self-evaluation document gave an accurate overview of the current situation and issues raised during the inspection were accepted as valid.
21. Changes to the faculty and management structure, with the recent appointment of an overall head of education, supported by programme leaders and their teams, have had a beneficial impact. Primary and secondary trainers are starting to work together, as in the developments in provision in special educational needs. Effective procedures and practices identified in the secondary programme, such as the electronic tracking of trainees' performance, have been introduced to the primary provision to ensure unity and quality across all teacher education. Information from placements and modules has been collated and analysed regularly throughout the year, with subsequent action to strengthen experiences for trainees. Good examples are the comprehensive tracking of trainees' confidence and knowledge related to the four strands of reading, with days in Leading Partners in Literacy schools for those trainees who require additional support, and also the training for all trainees in a commercial reading and writing scheme in use in local schools. A great deal of data is being gathered and analysed to give comparative outcomes for the programmes, groups of trainees and aspects of provision. An emerging issue is that the grades and wording to evaluate trainees' attainment are not giving a clear enough picture of where and when trainees are making progress, particularly within a grade.
22. Procedures to assure the quality of training are strengthening and are now good. Peer observation and in-school moderation of trainers' work with trainees are beginning. Centre-based trainers hold many roles, often including that of link tutor and/or studies adviser. Both these roles carry considerable responsibility in monitoring trainees' progress in meeting their targets, but there is no agreed formal procedure to assure the quality of such work or to evaluate whether trainees' targets are challenging enough. The scrutiny of Year 3 BA

trainees' files and consequent report on the quality of feedback and targets was a useful step forward.

23. The current improvement plans reflect the outcomes of the inspection in 2011 and have been shared with the partnership. Although detailed and providing a firm steer, several success criteria lack the precision needed to ensure critical evaluation. The development of one-page versions for trainees and for mentors of the improvement priorities has been a clear, straightforward step in identifying actions, roles and benefits for each. Trainers and trainees are consulted about the provision, but there is scope to develop the use of the findings, especially in giving schools within the partnership a more detailed overview of the quality of their training. The partnership development group, jointly chaired by a headteacher from a partnership school and a centre-based trainer, is open to all in the partnership. It is a valuable forum to discuss current issues and compile materials, such as training guidance for mentors, but it is not actively holding the partnership to full account or routinely evaluating the impact of action in meeting the targets in the partnership plan.
24. The provider is keeping abreast of national issues and changes in the provision of initial teacher education. The cross phase quality improvement group, set up specifically to oversee action to raise outcomes for trainees, is now looking at specific aspects for development, including strategies to assess and record trainees' progress in meeting the standards for teachers that come into force in September 2012.
25. Innovations, such as the BA Year 4 curriculum innovation module, TLP days and review weeks for all trainees, have been successful in strengthening coherence between theory and practice and have also been very well received by trainees and the partnership. Trainees are accepting increasing responsibility for their own professional development. Stringent selection procedures are having a positive impact in the application and engagement of trainees, and higher progression and completion rates most evident in the first and second undergraduate years which previously saw significant numbers of withdrawals. The decision to fund the MFL routes following the end of TDA funding has sustained the provider's ability to prepare trainees to be specialist MFL teachers in primary schools. Discussions are ongoing to develop training links with more special schools, following the success of the 20-day TDA funded project, and to agree how training and assessed placements in special schools can be integrated within the three-year BA programme. Such a move would enable the provider to meet an identified local employment need.

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

**Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.**

### Overall effectiveness

		Primary
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>2</b>
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

		Primary
<b>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?</b>		<b>2</b>
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

<sup>1</sup> 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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