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Dr Opie
Dean of McMillan School of Teaching, Health and Care
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Dear Dr Opie

Evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of phonics training in the Bradford College primary ITE partnership

Thank you for the help which you and your colleagues, trainees, former trainees and schools gave when Jacqueline Duncan (Additional Inspector) and I conducted a monitoring inspection of your primary ITE partnership on 26 and 27 February 2013. The focus of the inspection was to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of phonics training.

Having considered all of the evidence I am of the opinion that, at this time, the quality and effectiveness of phonics training are good.

Context

The Bradford College primary ITE partnership provides three programmes of early years and primary training in conjunction with approximately 250 schools and settings. At the time of the inspection 229 undergraduate trainees were following a full-time programme, over four years, leading to a bachelor of arts degree with qualified teacher status (BA with QTS). One hundred and thirteen trainees were following a one year full time postgraduate certificate in education programme. In addition, 36 trainees were following a two year part-time 'top up' bachelor of education (BEd) programme.

Inspectors visited three partnership schools. They observed four lessons taught by second year BA with QTS trainees during the first week of their second school experience, and four by newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Inspectors also observed three English training sessions taught by tutors to first year BA with QTS trainees. They also held discussions with groups of trainees from all three training



programmes, trainees and NQTs working in partnership schools, tutors, leaders and managers and mentors and head teachers. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentary evidence including phonics training materials, evaluations, impact studies and improvement plans.

Outcomes for trainees

Trainees have a good understanding of the subject knowledge required to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make). They understand the importance of teaching phonics systematically and willingly take responsibility for action planning for their own professional development in this area. Furthermore, they enjoy appropriate opportunities to put what they have learned in to practice during their school experiences. As a result of the good quality training both the confidence and competence of trainees to teach phonics has increased. Consequently, trainees are developing the phonic skills of the pupils they teach in reading, writing and spelling.

All of the newly qualified teachers observed were teaching good phonics lessons. Although the trainees observed teaching phonics during the inspection were less than half way through their training, they planned varied and motivating multi-sensory experiences appropriate for the age and ability of the pupils they were teaching. For example, children in a Reception class played a game of pass the parcel in which they unwrapped items that included 'er' in their names and then worked out the connection between the objects. This enabled most pupils to make at least expected progress in their learning. Trainees, however, are not always effective in assessing what individual pupils actually know and can do in phonics and picking up pupils' misconceptions during whole class teaching sessions. The partnership is addressing this with trainees on the BA with QTS programme by providing them with the opportunity to take responsibility for one child's reading progress over a period of time through the Teaching Reading Intervention Programme (TRIP). The result of this work is that trainees involved have developed good skills in assessing, planning and delivering a series of interventions which have impacted positively on pupils' reading levels.

The quality of training across the partnership

Trainees and NQTs are very positive about their training experience in phonics. This is in marked contrast to the Teaching Agency's NQT survey data where responses have been below sector norms for the last two years and NQTs have indicated their dissatisfaction with the quality of their phonics training. Trainees indicated that they learned most from the high-quality phonics sessions modelled by tutors and their practical teaching in schools. Trainees felt that some of the more theoretical inputs would be better completed as independent reading tasks.

Training is carefully planned and structured to ensure all trainees receive the necessary core experiences to enable them to become effective teachers of phonics, language and English. The use of a well-structured reading observation pro forma and the requirement for trainees to complete a series of school-based tasks ensure



centre and school-based training links together well. There are clear procedures for auditing, testing and tracking trainees' subject knowledge and practical experiences of phonics. All trainees are observed teaching phonics on school experience and trainees have to go through a verification process which checks they have met the requirements of the Teachers' Standards in relation to phonics at the end of their programme. Tutors from the language team have provided valuable guidance and training for mentors and conducted joint phonics lesson observations with link tutor colleagues.

Centre-based training is of good quality overall and is provided by a team of committed and creative language specialists with appropriate subject knowledge and recent and relevant experience. This includes a new member of the team recruited from a partnership school with specific skills and expertise in phonics. Discrete training and practice in phonics is included in all language and English modules. Good attention is paid to teaching phonics across the Early Years Foundation Stage and both key stages on all training programmes regardless of trainees' age phase specialism. This means that trainees teaching in Key Stage 2 are able to draw on phonic strategies used with younger pupils to support pupils struggling with their reading. Centre-based training session evaluations are used well to ensure subsequent training caters for the needs of individual and groups of trainees and builds their confidence and competence.

The quality of leadership and management of the ITE partnership

Effective leadership and management are ensuring that the quality and effectiveness of training and the outcomes for trainees in phonics have improved. These improvements were recognised by both school colleagues and NQTs spoken with during this inspection. Greater attention is now given to the use of trainee satisfaction data and the tracking of trainees' knowledge, understanding and skills. The action plan for improving the quality of training in phonics identifies the correct priorities and includes appropriate actions. In addition, a number of effective projects have been piloted to enhance the quality of training. These have been carefully evaluated through the use of well-targeted, quantitative impact studies. Successful approaches in phonics, language and English are being shared across other curriculum areas. In order to build capacity leaders are beginning to compile data on phonics expertise within the partnership.

Colleagues from the Teaching Agency have visited the partnership to monitor its work in phonics.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your ITE partnership. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector

