

Teesside University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Inspection Dates 10–13 March 2014

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors in accordance with the *ITE Inspection Handbook*. This handbook sets out the statutory basis and framework for initial teacher education (ITE) inspections in England from January 2013.

The inspection draws upon evidence from within the ITE partnership to make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

	ITE for FE
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	2
The outcomes for trainees	2
The quality of training across the partnership	2
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	2

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Initial teacher education for the further education system

Information about the FE in ITE partnership

- Teesside University works with eight partner colleges (five are franchised partners and three are validated partners) offering a range of one-year, full-time, pre-service and two-year, part-time, pre-service and in-service programmes. These lead to a Certificate in Education, or a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education, or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education or a Postgraduate Diploma Education and Training and incorporate the requirements of the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. There are several pathways to these qualifications: generic pathways in a wide range of specialist areas; a Skills for Life pathway in English (English for speakers of other languages/literacy); a mathematics (numeracy) pathway and pathways for teaching learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The university and colleges also provide Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector courses leading to awarding body qualifications. These programmes were not included in this inspection.
- Trainees on the in-service programme are employed in a wide range of settings and specialist areas and teach at all curriculum levels, including higher-education programmes. Many of these trainees are employed in the partner colleges; others work in a range of learning and skills settings.
- Pre-service trainees have teaching placements in partner colleges, in local secondary schools, or in other local training providers in a range of settings.
- At the time of the inspection there were 145 trainees on full-time routes, 182 in the first year of the part-time route and 180 in the second year of the part-time route. Of these, 24 trainees were being trained in the university. The number of trainees on generic routes was 334 and on specialist programmes, 149.
- The inspection also included former trainees from both pre-service and in-service programmes who completed their training recently.

Information about the FE in ITE inspection

- The six inspectors met staff from all eight partner colleges and the university and undertook 34 observations. Of these, 21 were of trainees, seven of former trainees and six of training sessions. Many of the observations of trainees were joint ones with either the trainee's tutor or mentor. Inspectors interviewed these trainees and most of their mentors and tutors and held meetings with groups of trainees.

- Inspectors had extensive discussions with programme leaders and other staff at the university and the colleges. They scrutinised trainees' files, individual learning plans, course documentation and the virtual learning environment.

Inspection Team

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Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the FE partnership are:

- The good teaching, learning and assessment skills exhibited by many trainees and former trainees demonstrate their deep understanding of the learning process.
- The very good training sessions that encourage trainees' reflection provide meaningful links between theory and practice use a wide range of resources and engaging learning activities and exemplify best practice in teaching and learning for their trainees.
- The good subject-specialist mentoring supports, advises and guides trainees to improve their teaching skills.
- The much-improved strategic vision and ambitious leadership of the partnership reflect the strong commitment of senior managers to build and sustain improvements in outcomes for trainees. This is matched by the willingness of staff at all levels to implement change that benefits trainees.
- The much-increased capacity to improve is demonstrated by significant developments, within a relatively short period of time, to improve the quality of provision and consequently the outcomes for trainees.

What does the FE partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Increase the rigour of the recruitment and selection process to ensure that trainees have the potential and commitment to succeed on their chosen course and improve the quality and ease of use of the enrolment, registration and induction systems.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of mentoring by:
 - monitoring its quality more rigorously
 - providing accessible mentor development for all mentors
 - involving mentors in self-evaluation processes
 - increasing the sharing of mentoring best practice.
- Increase the effectiveness and value of the partnership's self-evaluation and associated development processes so that they provide the overarching driving force for quality improvement, through which key strengths are sustained, key areas for development are addressed and the impact on trainees' outcomes is closely monitored.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good.

1. The proportions of trainees successfully completing the pre-service and the direct-entry year two of the in-service course are high and have been so for several years. Retention rates are high and the great majority of trainees who complete the course achieve the qualification. The success rates on the part-time provision, however, have declined and are low. The reason for this is low retention, which is mostly explained by changing circumstances beyond trainees' and the partnership's control. Many of the withdrawals from the course were two years ago when the partnership was judged to require improvement and the legacy of this is still evident in the completion rates for 2012/13. The current retention rates for these courses, however, have increased compared with the same time last year and are high. The outcomes for trainees from different groups show no significant variation over time, indicating that trainees are not disadvantaged by virtue of their age, gender, ethnicity or learning difficulty and/or disability.
2. The training prepares trainees well for working in the education and training sector and gives them valuable employment skills, although the encouragement for trainees to improve their English and/or mathematics skills is often not taken up by trainees. A significant majority of trainees gain employment when they leave their courses. Destination data for the last three years indicate that the proportion that became teachers in the lifelong learning sector varied and has decreased, reflecting the national

picture, whereas the proportion becoming teachers in the secondary sector increased significantly. Nearly all trainees leave to work as teachers or trainers.

3. By the end of their training, the great majority of trainees have attained the characteristics of good teachers. This is a consequence of the good training they experience and also the good subject-specialist support they receive from their mentors. These trainees meet, or in a few cases, exceed the professional standards for teachers in the lifelong learning sector. A much higher proportion attains at a good or better level in their teaching practice than in their academic assignments. The partnership acknowledges that their criteria for the evaluation of trainees' in-year achievement and final attainment are not fully understood and interpreted consistently by all partners. This is an area that managers are refining and clarifying.
4. Trainees are very committed to improving their teaching practice and their academic assignments and receive very effective support and guidance to do so through feedback from their tutors and mentors. Consequently, they develop a deep understanding of the learning process that helps them to enable their learners to learn and make good progress with their studies. The trainees make learning a very active and enjoyable process for their learners. They plan and implement very well-integrated strategies to improve their learners' English and mathematical skills. For example, learners in a beauty therapy lesson developed their numeracy skills by calculating the percentages of carrier oil needed for a massage.
5. Trainees are very well prepared to teach in the lifelong learning sector in terms of classroom management, challenging behaviour management, and how best to meet the needs of learners with differing abilities. Their understanding of how best to work with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is variable. They are less confident about the implications of the recent curriculum initiatives such as the 16–19 study programmes including traineeships and supported internships, in particular about the requirements for meaningful work experience. They are well aware, however, of the need to increase learners' employability skills and many incorporate activities that develop social skills through cooperative group work, peer assessment tasks and presentations.
6. Trainees have very good subject knowledge which they use very effectively to relate topics to the real world and to practical applications. Where relevant, they integrate matters relating to equality and diversity into their lessons to increase their learners' understanding of, and tolerance towards, different cultures and attitudes. For example, catering learners developed their understanding of a diverse range of customers and how their specific needs might be met in the food and

drink service. In the best lessons, trainees plan well to meet the needs of the wide range of learners' abilities and in most cases they implement these plans, so that each learner is challenged by activities of an appropriate level. In the less effective examples, however, all learners engage in the same activities for the same length of time. Consequently, more able learners are not motivated sufficiently to reach higher levels and less able learners find the activities difficult and do not make good progress.

7. The best trainees have a very good classroom presence and naturally command their learners' respect and attention. Consequently, learners are willing to learn and to engage fully in a wide range of enjoyable and interesting activities. Trainees have a very good rapport with their learners and enable them to be confident in their learning. Trainees use information and learning technology extremely effectively in the best lessons. They integrate the use of modern resources effortlessly into teaching and learning activities and learners thrive on their interaction and involvement with such applications. Most trainees monitor their learners' progress thoroughly during lessons, check that learning is taking place and evaluate at the end of the lesson how well the aims and objectives of the lesson have been achieved. Many trainees provide very supportive, immediate feedback to their learners and compliment them if their work and answers are of a high standard. Most trainees use directed questioning very meaningfully to assess learning and are not prepared to accept an initial superficial answer; they delve more deeply to ascertain that learners have understood fully. Other trainees, however, ask mostly general questions so that the same learners respond each time and other learners are not involved. In a minority of cases, trainees' excessive talk results in learners losing interest and motivation to learn.
8. Trainees mostly plan learning in great detail and very comprehensively. They set relevant objectives for learning and incorporate a very wide range of creative teaching and learning methods, aimed at including all their learners and promoting collaboration and teamwork. Starter activities are often fast-paced and exciting and ensure that previous work is recalled and understanding checked. Most trainees implement these plans in practice, but occasionally their determination to differentiate between the needs of each learner is less successful. The best trainees are so confident in their practice that they modify their plan when necessary, even if this means taking risks. Most trainees have developed very thorough self-reflection skills. They use these very sensibly and logically to analyse the key aspects of their lessons and to enter any ensuing areas for development in their individual learning plans.

The quality of training across the partnership is good.

9. The quality of the training that prepares trainees to teach in the lifelong learning sector is good with outstanding features. It is of a consistently high standard across the partnership as a result of the commitment, energy, enthusiasm and competence of trainers and mentors at the university and in each of the partner colleges. The impact of this training and support is evident in the abilities of trainees to plan, deliver and manage learning in a wide range of contexts, to the benefit of their learners. Improvements to systems, processes and curriculum by managers and staff across the partnership have ensured that the good quality of training reported in the last inspection has been sustained and developed. The specialist teacher training for English and mathematics is of a high standard.
10. Training sessions are good or better because they encourage trainees' self-reflection, provide useful links between theory and practice and use a wide range of innovative and effective learning strategies. Teacher trainers model best practice in teaching, learning and assessment, such that trainees can adopt their styles, ideas and approaches and adapt them to their own teaching practices.
11. In the best training sessions, trainers work very closely with trainees and include them in all aspects of the new topic, such that trainees often appear to be leading the session and are in effect practising what the trainer is teaching. Trainers and trainees use modern technology to great effect in illustrating new ideas and methods. In one outstanding session the trainer asked trainees to write questions on mini whiteboards. Once the first question was asked and answered this then rolled on to the next, ensuring that each trainee was on standby expecting the next question to be theirs. This critical tension ensured that all trainees were highly attentive, willing and fully engaged in the learning activity. The trainer prompted most appropriately when needed. The result was that trainees understood the new topic fully, used their own experiences to widen the understanding and expertise of others, and all trainees progressed significantly in a short time.
12. Trainees benefit from a flexible programme that allows them to study at times which meet their personal needs. They gain greatly from their experienced and competent trainers who provide high levels of targeted support, advice and guidance to meet individual needs. Staff and managers in the colleges and the university are much more aware of trainees' own needs and whether they are at risk of underperforming, falling behind or leaving the course. This is because of the efficient and effective use of the student tracker system which provides frequent updates to staff so that they can intervene where and when necessary.

This is one of the main reasons why current retention rates are higher than at the same time last year.

13. Trainers are well qualified and have a wide range of teaching experiences in the further education and skills sector and in teacher training. Recently appointed trainers and managers have very suitable experience with other providers and considerable expertise in training teachers for the sector. Trainees have access to a wide range of good resources and accommodation that help them to learn how best to use new technology to aid learning and to practise their skills in environments conducive to learning. The virtual learning environment is a useful repository of learning materials and resources, but it is not used interactively or as a discussion forum. Trainees often find it difficult to navigate and slow to respond.
14. Each trainee has a subject-specialist mentor who provides frequent and good support for the trainee. Mentors advise and guide trainees to improve their teaching skills, especially in their own subject area. They offer different ideas and ways for teaching a particular topic and so open up new opportunities to their trainees. Trainees often gain from observing their mentors and from teaching with their mentor. Mentors encourage trainees so that they become more able to reflect sensibly on their teaching practice and to realise what they should attempt to improve. Consequently, trainees become more confident teachers. Mentors observe their trainees formally four times and provide very constructive feedback to help trainees improve their teaching, learning and assessment. For example, one trainee described how his mentor had helped him to simplify content in order to meet the needs of his learners. Another was very pleased that his mentor had developed his ability to work with decimals.
15. Many trainees, especially those on in-service courses, benefit from a wide range of placements that provide them with a good breadth of teaching experience. Most trainees work with learners across the age range and at different levels of ability. They also work with learners from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a varied range of needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other trainees, including those on the pre-service course, often have a more limited experience, for example, teaching predominantly one subject in one provider and to learners aged 16 to 18 on AS and GCE A-level courses. Other trainees do not take up the opportunities available to observe lessons in different settings. Trainees develop their knowledge and skills through additional events, such as the trainee conference which gave them very useful professional development in behaviour management and the use of learning technologies.

16. Assessment of trainees is mostly accurate, although the consistent understanding of the criteria to judge achievement is an area for development across the partnership. The teaching toolkit aids the understanding of what to consider during lesson observations in different contexts and how best to feedback to trainees about their teaching practice. Tutors and mentors understand the relative strengths and areas for development of their trainees. Their feedback on how to improve trainees' teaching and their learners' understanding is usually very constructive and practical. Usually, but not always, observers consider trainees' targets from their previous observation to judge the progress made. Most assignments are marked carefully and rigorously. Feedback is usually very detailed and provides clear pointers on how to improve academic work. Most marking and feedback correlate with the marks awarded, but this is rigorously checked through moderation and second marking. Occasionally, this has an impact in that feedback is altered and/or marks are changed.
17. The various elements of the training provision combine very successfully to aid trainees' progress. Support and guidance from trainers, mentors, support staff, resources staff and peers encourage trainees to develop their skills and to make good progress in meeting the professional standards.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is good.

18. Leadership and management have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now good. Since then, leaders and managers at all levels and across all partners have taken action to make improvements to the quality of the provision and to the outcomes for trainees. Many of the actions to increase staffing and to introduce better quality systems have been very successful, as evidenced by the recent improvements to outcomes for trainees. The strategic vision and ambitious leadership of the partnership reflect the strong commitment of senior managers in each institution to build sustainable improvements. This vision, however, would be of minimal impact without the willingness of staff to implement the new quality assurance processes. The partnership is a harmonious one in which staff at all levels work together for the benefit of their trainees.
19. Senior managers at the university have worked very closely with their counterparts in the partnership and in placement providers to gauge their determination to continue with the provision. The support for this was very strong and the partnership decided to continue and to improve the quality of its initial teacher training for the further education and skills sector. Senior managers also agreed to enlarge the partnership to include two new colleges under a validation arrangement. The process

by which these partners were accepted was extremely rigorous and demanding in order to ensure that the new arrangements would be mutually beneficial.

20. The rigour of the previous recruitment and selection processes was a major area for development in parts of the partnership. Improvements have been made and continue to be made to ensure that the selection processes are more demanding and that trainees who are accepted have the commitment, wherewithal and potential to succeed on the most appropriate course for their circumstances. Trainees now complete their PTLLS course before enrolling on the higher level courses. This has reduced the number of withdrawals from these courses. Trainees did not consider that recruitment and selection were rigorous and indeed a minority did not have a face-to-face interview. Trainees also, quite rightly, were dissatisfied with the enrolment and registration arrangements at their college and university, perceiving unnecessary duplication and difficulty. The partnership is taking action to address these issues.
21. The self-evaluation processes conducted by the partner colleges and the university are good. They are self-critical and realistic and, in many cases, evaluative. These processes result in statements of key strengths and key areas for development, which then inform the development plans which are mostly good and enable actions against targets to be closely monitored. The overarching self-evaluation for the partnership, however, lacks evaluation in many parts, contains gaps in data, has insufficient comment about trainees' progress and attainment and does not analyse trainees' outcomes by different groups. Managers are aware of these issues and are taking action to improve the partnership's self-evaluation.
22. Managers have improved the monitoring of the mentoring process significantly since the last inspection. Mentors' observation reports are considered and appropriate actions taken if needed. The first observation by a mentor should be a joint one with a tutor in order to provide staff development and also to standardise mentors' judgements and grades, but this shared observation does not always take place until later in the course. Mentors benefit from a good website for mentors and from very useful, informative and readable monthly mentor newsletters. The annotated lesson observation helps mentors to improve their observation skills and their completion of the observation outcomes proforma. Not all mentors have yet been trained as mentors or as lesson observers. Mentors are not routinely involved in the self-assessment process and do not meet formally with their trainee and tutor to discuss how best to assist the trainee to improve. Mentors do not meet across the partnership to share best mentoring practice. Very effective quality enhancement visits by university staff to each college involve senior

managers, programme leaders, trainers, mentors and trainees. Observations of trainers and/or trainees are completed and provide invaluable information to enable improvement. This process demonstrates a significant commitment by university managers and demonstrates very good monitoring of the provision.

23. The partnership and its members comply with the ITE in FE requirements and the statutory requirements in relation to equality and diversity, safeguarding, discrimination and harassment. The marketing of the provision to people under-represented in teaching in the lifelong learning sector is good and is effective. The proportion of pre-service trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds undergoing training within the partnership is greater than the proportion of people in the area from such backgrounds.
24. The partnership's capacity to improve has increased since the last inspection and is strong. This is demonstrated by the many significant developments within a relatively short period of time which have been successful. The quality of leadership and management across the partnership and outcomes for trainees have both improved and are now good. Most trainees are very pleased with the quality of their experiences within this partnership.

Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Bradford College
Darlington College
Hartlepool College
Middlesbrough College
Newcastle College Group
New College Durham
Redcar and Cleveland College
Stockton Riverside College

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70106
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