



INSPECTION REPORT

Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)

MATTHEW BOULTON COLLEGE
Validated by the University of Birmingham

A 2004/05 Inspection

Managing Inspector: S Dillon HMI

Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

BACKGROUND

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the Inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004.

2. The University of Birmingham works in partnership with Matthew Boulton College to provide a Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.) for Further Education (FE) teachers and other trainers in the post-compulsory sector. These two institutions have collaborated in the development and delivery of training courses for teachers of further and adult education since 1999. The course has been revalidated twice (2000 and 2003) by the University. The Certificate in Education (FE) is an endorsed qualification that satisfies the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers.

3. The Cert. Ed. run by Matthew Boulton College's teacher trainers is offered on a part-time basis over two years and is taught at the college's main campus. All the modules are taught and assessed by college staff and are subject to the university's quality assurance procedures. Trainees attend for 3 hours per week during the first year and for 6.5 hours per week in the second year. All 77 trainees are in-service and many teach at Matthew Boulton College. The College also offers national awarding body teaching qualifications and credit is given to trainees who wish to progress to the Cert. Ed.

THE INSPECTION

4. The inspection was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Inspectors evaluated provision run by Matthew Boulton College and validated by the University of Birmingham. During the first phase of the inspection in February 2005, they focused on the quality of training and on the management and quality assurance procedures. During the second phase inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievements of the FE trainees by observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. This phase was completed in June 2005.

A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

5. The overall quality of provision is good (**grade 2**). Trainees reach a high level of teaching competence and, regardless of their starting point, make good progress on the course. They demonstrate high professional standards and are very committed to improving their teaching. They support their students well by using a wide range of teaching and learning styles and by effective differentiation. However, in a minority of cases trainees do not manage the timing of lesson activities effectively and occasionally rely too much on their input to the exclusion of students' involvement. Teacher trainers are very good role models for their trainees. They support trainees well through assessments, tutorials and learning journals. The

leadership and management of the teacher training team are very effective and ensure educational and social inclusion are given a high priority throughout the course. Although considerable improvements in mentoring and subject-specific support have taken place, both are underdeveloped. The relations between the college, the external examiner, the board of studies and the university are very good and lead to improvements. The college and the university focus on improving the quality of the provision and in taking prompt action to address areas of concern. The partnership arrangements between the university and the college are very effective and lead to improvements which benefit the trainees' experience. However, insufficient emphasis has been given to the development of progression routes and to maximising the use of resources at the university.

KEY STRENGTHS

6. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- high professional standards of most trainees and commitment to improving their teaching
- very good training given to in-service trainees in general teaching and learning and lesson planning
- well-developed and effective systems of supporting trainees through assignments, tutorials and learning journals
- strong leadership of the programme
- clear focus and emphasis on equal opportunities in training and marketing materials, recruitment and data analysis
- very effective partnership arrangements between the university and college which focus on improving quality.

AREAS FOR ATTENTION

7. The partnership should address:

- trainees' management of lesson timings and their involvement of students in learning
- underdeveloped mentoring and subject-specific support systems
- underdeveloped progression routes and use of resources at the university.

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES

8. All the trainees are very committed to improving their teaching and to setting high professional standards. They are very supportive of their students and are empathetic to their various needs. They work well with many students from a very wide range of backgrounds and abilities; many have language difficulties, some have physical difficulties and many are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Trainees give considerable time and effort to improve their preparation and delivery of lessons to high standards.

9. Trainees are self-critical about their teaching and other work. Trainees evaluate their lessons very carefully and thoroughly. These evaluations are self-critical, are of high quality and support the trainees' development. They use the results of evaluation well in planning. Professional development journals are insightful and well focussed. They include trainers' comments and are an effective means by which trainees can reflect on their lessons, develop self-confidence and develop better practice.

10. All trainees are very knowledgeable of their subject/vocational areas. Some are very well qualified to higher degree level. Their qualifications are highly appropriate to the levels of qualification they teach. Most are engaged in further study to increase their qualifications in their specialist areas. All are very competent in their pedagogical techniques.

11. Lessons are planned meticulously. In most cases a wide range of teaching and learning styles is evident and is effectively used. All the trainees' plans include tasks which enable students of different abilities and stages to develop. Clear objectives are set with the students at the start of the lesson in accordance with the lesson plans. Schemes of work are comprehensive and detailed and cross-referenced to the main criteria of the syllabus. However, in the less effective practice seen too much time is allocated for completion of activities and students are not fully engaged in learning.

12. A wide range of teaching methods and resources is used in order to facilitate learning; small group tasks, whole class exercises, question and answer, one-to-one support, power point presentations, incomplete handouts, role play, games and pictorial materials. These are used very effectively and enable students to understand new concepts. However, in one case a presentation was teacher-dominated and students had no chance to express the new concepts in their own words. Trainees use strategies which are meaningful and relevant to their students, for example one trainee found how to address and compensate for the Eurocentric nature of the texts used with students of Asian and middle-eastern backgrounds.

13. Trainees manage their classes very well. For example, one trainee teaches a small group of students who are at quite different stages of the course. Their progress is tracked very carefully. Another trainee worked very well with the whole group to extract ideas from their small group work which was cleverly and pictorially presented on the board. In most cases trainees check thoroughly that learning is taking place, both during the lesson and at the end. At the end of a lesson, one

trainee asked each student in turn to evaluate how well they had learned the new topics.

14. A wide range of assessment tools to determine students' understanding is used. Students receive positive and helpful feedback on their assessments. Much assessment is done during lessons so that trainees can keep abreast of each student's progress. The results of diagnostic tests and prior attainment data are used to match lessons to students' needs. Assessment tasks are very appropriate to differentiate between the learning of students with a wide range of abilities.

15. All trainees are very supportive of their students and they advise them on how to access college-wide support mechanisms. One trainee set up a session with an educational psychologist for a student with learning difficulties. Another trainee had researched the pastoral needs of ESOL students and prepared taped material for a visually impaired student to use. All trainees give of their own time outside lessons to help their students, many of whom have considerable difficulties.

C QUALITY OF TRAINING

16. The structure of the Cert. Ed. is well designed and allows for structured trainee development. It has both a theoretical and a practical learning base. The programme is well phased and trainees are thoroughly aware of its objectives. The first year of the course focuses on developing practical teaching skills whilst the second year deepens the trainees' understanding of being a reflective practitioner, builds their theoretical knowledge and incorporates skills development. In year 1, trainees are taught a module on the skills of the practising FE teacher and undertake 60 hours of teaching practice. In addition they present a research assignment designed to enhance their skills in research and critical analysis. In year 2 they take a further module on curriculum theory, design and practice as well as a module which consists of two electives out of choice of five.

17. The course encourages trainees to draw on their own experiences. The inclusion of the teaching practices and observations into the modules allows trainees to integrate their learning with their practical experience. Trainers frequently and effectively invite trainees to contribute their teaching experiences to the rest of the group to amplify a topic. Trainers use the results of observations well to indicate to trainees appropriate issues for attention. The timing of the professional practice assignments in the second year gives good opportunity for trainees to reflect on their own vocational specialisms.

18. Trainees benefit from good training. All trainers' lessons are planned carefully. The common lesson plan format is detailed and comprehensive. It is that recommended to the trainees and therefore its use in training sessions models good practice. Well-focused lesson objectives are shared with the trainees and revisited at the end of the lesson to ensure coverage and understanding. Schemes of work are detailed and comprehensive and cross-referenced clearly to the FENTO standards. Trainers set high expectations for the trainees and their lessons are exemplars for them. A wide variety of teaching methods is used within lessons. Group and individual work are used to good effect. Tutors know their trainees well

and involve them in the lesson. They model good teaching practice using ice-breaking starters. Plenaries are used very well to increase learning. In one session excellent use was made of the interactive white board and the tutor challenged the trainees on how and why white board technology had aided their own learning and how this could be transferred to their own lessons. The pace of the lessons is brisk but time is allowed for in-depth discussion. Tutors understand their roles and responsibilities well and these are clearly set out in a comprehensive personal tutor handbook.

19. The development of subject-specific teaching skills is insufficient. Little emphasis is given to the importance of teaching methodologies in the trainees' own vocational specialisms and backgrounds.

20. Prior to entry onto the Certificate in Education course an initial analysis of trainees' literacy and numeracy skills is carried out at level 2. Where necessary, an action plan with remedial support is produced. This is through in-college support or 'Learn Direct'. In addition trainees who need one-off support in writing or drafting an assignment seek help from the Student Support Centre. Additional needs of trainees are further investigated by their completing a piece of free writing. Trainees' ICT skills are not determined at the start of the course. Trainees benefit greatly from the support provided, although the uptake by a minority of trainees is slow. Their written work in their final assignments is markedly better than that in their earlier assignments.

21. All tutors on the Certificate in Education course act as personal tutors to the trainees. They hold frequent 1:1 tutorials which update the individual learning plans and provide well directed advice and guidance to trainees. The individual learning plans are used rigorously by the trainers to monitor the progress of the trainees. The tutorial records set targets for trainees which are then followed up at the next meeting. Trainers take prompt remedial action where needed.

22. Trainees are able to submit draft assignments and are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. The handbook sets out the explicit assessment criteria which have to be met and which are linked to the FENTO standards. The assignments allow trainees to relate their own practical experiences to the subject being covered. However, there is no discrete assessment of their individual subject knowledge. A sample of assignments is double- and blind-marked to ensure accuracy and consistency. Trainees receive very detailed and helpful feedback on assignments.

D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

23. Strong links exist between the teacher training and the human resources sections in the college. All recruitment advertisements require that an appointee without teacher-training qualifications will work towards obtaining them. Currently 96% of all full-time lecturers employed at the college have a teaching qualification. The heads of the quality and human resources sections liaise closely to monitor the teaching qualifications of new staff and the progress made by trainees on the Cert. Ed. course. New staff who possess teaching qualifications are monitored as part of

the induction and performance management arrangements to ensure that their teaching skills are adequate. Advanced practitioners are used well to support teachers improve their teaching skills. The teacher trainers are frequently involved in advising and supporting teachers.

24. Although progression routes between courses at the college are well signposted and are appropriate in terms of accreditation of prior experiential learning no progression routes exist onto degree courses in education (FE) at the University.

25. The college appreciates that given its geographical position it attracts trainees from black and minority ethnic backgrounds but it still places emphasis upon recruitment from under-represented communities. All teacher-education materials promote the importance of equal opportunities. The college works well with community partners to encourage those who would not traditionally consider teacher training to come forward. For example, the college is currently trying to recruit women from the Muslim faith by going out to meet them in their communities.

26. The college produces a wide variety of high quality marketing materials which explain the content, entry requirements and progression routes of the teacher training courses. The college has an agreed and published selection process. All applicants who have not been on an access or lower level course at the college are interviewed by the course team. These interviews are thorough and comprehensive and trainees are made aware of the criteria against which they are being judged.

27. Although most trainees have a mentor there is no auditing of their subject knowledge and it is left up to them to ensure their own subject-specific development. However, first year trainees in particular have benefited considerably from the improvements in mentoring during 2004-05. Mentors observe trainees teach and the outcomes of these are shared with and well used by the trainers. Mentors understand their responsibilities and generally discharge them effectively. Mentors are not always subject specialists in the same area as the trainee.

28. The course is well led and managed by the course co-ordinator. The course arrangements are administered very effectively and thoroughly and the co-ordinator is very responsive to the needs of the trainees and her team. She leads the team well and is constantly seeking further improvements. She has a very good understanding of her roles and responsibilities. Tutors also understand their roles and fulfil them effectively.

29. Spending on specialist library resources has been increased and the quality and quantity of the book stock are more than adequate for the needs of trainers and trainees. Trainees and trainers do not use the library facilities at the university. Insufficient use is made of the physical and human resources available at the university.

30. However, the partnership links with the university are otherwise strong. The practical working relations are harmonious and effective. Both parties seek to improve the experience of the trainee. Both respond to trainees' needs and promote trainees' involvement in the course. The highly effective partnership arrangements

include the involvement of the visitor, the external examiner, the board of studies and college trainers and trainees.

31. The college meets its responsibilities fully in terms of race relations and equality of opportunity. It analyses data by gender and ethnicity and takes appropriate action. An equal opportunities monitoring committee receives reports on these issues which are then passed on to the Academic Board. Action plans are drawn up to address issues.

32. The observations of trainees' teaching are very thorough. A sample of observations is double-assessed to ensure consistency and feedback comments are very analytical and supportive. Thorough internal moderation of assessments and of teaching observations is regularly carried out by the course team. The course co-ordinator provides useful advice and guidance to assessors by information sheets and e-mails. The accuracy of lesson observation grades is checked by other team members and internal verification meetings are regularly timetabled. Internal verifiers complete full records which are shared with trainees.

33. The college systems for evaluating and improving the quality of provision are very good. The course team meets termly and the outcomes feed into the annual course review. This is also informed by the results from trainees' evaluations, data on recruitment and retention, external examiners' and verifiers' reports. Action plans are drawn up in response to the external examiners' report and all the points from the last report have been addressed fully. The self-assessment report is based upon the guidelines from the Ofsted ITT (FE) Inspection Framework. Some of the actions and targets resulting from self-assessment are stated in too general terms.

34. External quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and comprehensive. The university has reorganised the quality assurance arrangements for its collaborative provision under a pro-vice chancellor. Different aspects of quality assurance are brought together under one main system and all findings are fed into appropriate committees. Any action required is followed through to completion. Reviews by the external examiner and the visitor are detailed and comprehensive and they lead to changes beneficial to the trainees. Trainees' representation and input into the running of the course are welcomed and appropriate changes are made.