

**Secondary Initial Teacher Training
Partnership based on**

North Bedfordshire SCITT Consortium

**Samuel Whitbread Community School
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Bedfordshire
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**A short inspection report
2005/06**

**Managing Inspector:
John Williams HMI**

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Introduction

The North Bedfordshire Consortium works in partnership with local schools to provide secondary initial teacher training courses for pupils aged 11-16. It offers English, mathematics, science, history, geography and art at post PGCE level. At the time of the inspection there were 24 trainees on the course.

Context

The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors in accordance with the *Ofsted Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training (2005-2011)*.

This report draws on evidence from a short inspection of the provision and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Main inspection judgements

Management and quality assurance: **Grade 2**

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the partnership's knowledge of and focus on trainees' individual needs
- the commitment shown by all trainers to the partnership
- the precise moderation of judgements about trainees' progress
- the attention paid to the partnership's race and equality policies.

Points for consideration

- improving the web site as a means of advertising for prospective trainees
- ensuring that all mentors have a good understanding of the quality of evidence needed to show subject knowledge targets are met.

The quality of training

1. The structure of the course is designed well to ensure that the Requirements are met and that trainees make good progress towards meeting the Standards. Course content is kept under review. There is good coherence between the subject-specific sessions, the professional studies sessions, and the training provided by schools. Trainees are provided with extensive guidance and support. Documentation to reinforce this process is good. In art, for example, the links between the various components of the course are made very clear in the subject application handbook.

2. Course co-ordinators, subject leaders and mentors know their trainees very well. Though there have been some administrative problems over the processing of subject knowledge audits, responding to individual trainees' needs is one of the strengths of the training. For example, a science trainee with an interest in agricultural science was placed in a specialist school that provides expert support and a wide range of opportunities to teach this subject. Subject knowledge and information and communications technology audits are carried out very early in the course and subject leaders adapt their training in light of these. In English, for example, mentors are aware of trainees' individual needs and plan their teaching and other aspects of school-based training with these in mind. In art, trainees are shown new techniques and asked to apply them in their teaching in order to develop their subject knowledge.

3. The monitoring of trainees' progress is also a strength of the course. The regular monitoring of trainees' progress during weekly mentoring sessions, with summative half-termly reports, leads to subject leaders and course co-ordinators taking action if trainees are failing to progress well towards meeting the Standards. The quality of target setting is good. Trainers make good use of subject-specific exemplification of how to meet the Standards, but some subject leaders do not identify precisely what constitutes evidence of meeting a subject knowledge target.

4. Procedures for assessing trainees against the Standards and for moderating assessments are robust and operate effectively. Mentors observe trainees teaching on a regular basis and provide oral and written feedback which is linked to the Standards. These observations are used to compile profiles of trainees' progress at regular points throughout the year. The profile judgements are moderated at subject meetings and this can lead to changes to grades, for example where there is insufficient evidence to support a judgement. There is also increasing use of joint observations by subject leaders and mentors to secure consistency.

Management and quality assurance

5. The course prospectus contains information that is comprehensive, clear and accurate, but the partnership's web site is not as informative. A significant improvement from the last inspection is that selection procedures have now been implemented consistently across the partnership. All trainees are interviewed by both subject leader and one of the partnership co-ordinators. Procedures are good and include well designed interview questions that test both subject knowledge and aptitude to teaching. Forms used to record judgements and assess the candidates are good, and interviewers make perceptive comments and accurate assessments about candidates' suitability. Some particularly well qualified trainees have been recruited, and many show a strong commitment to teaching. The partnership has met its recruitment targets, including those from minority ethnic groups. Withdrawal rates are low. Successful candidates are sent a letter asking them to address some of the gaps in subject knowledge identified on the interview day, though not all prepare well for the start of the course.

6. The management and committee structure works well in supporting the training and assessment of the trainees. All committees have appropriate terms of reference and membership. The concept of shared responsibility underpins the management. For example, there are joint SCITT co-ordinators and paired subject leaders. This results in continuity in the management and the co-ordination of the training. Where possible, a subject has one subject leader based in an upper (14-19) school and one in a middle (9-13) school, thus bringing expertise from across the age range to the central training. Schools provide good training bases. There is considerable mentor expertise and turnover is low. An impressive feature of staff meetings is that the first agenda item is always an evaluation of the impact of the partnerships' race and equal opportunity policies.

7. The quality of the partnership agreement has improved since the last inspection. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood. For example, the responsibility for central subject training lies squarely with the subject leaders. Not all mentors have a good understanding of the content of centre-based training. However, subject teams work very well together, particularly in moderating trainees' progress.

8. Co-ordinators and trainers are very enthusiastic about what they do and show great commitment to the partnership. Although co-ordinators have been allocated extra time this year in order to carry out their responsibilities, the timetabling of training sessions and twilight meetings results in considerable pressure being placed on trainees and trainers. Attendance at staff meetings is very good; programmes and professional studies are regularly reviewed in these meetings. For 2005/06, there were a significant number of new subject leaders. The applications process for these posts was excellent. Suitable staff were identified and those appointed already show significant potential in terms of course design and delivery.

9. The assessment and moderation of trainees' progress are very good. All involved in this small partnership quickly develop an understanding of individual trainees' strengths and weaknesses. Moderation within and across subjects ensures consistency of assessment against the Standards.

10. Trainees complete questionnaires at key points during the year about the quality of mentoring and central training, and these evaluations are used quickly to modify course content. The management team responds very rapidly to suggestions. As a result of the last inspection, subject leaders now produce end-of-year reports. The overall action plan is derived from these reports and the external examiner's report. The latter is excellent; it is perceptive and comprehensive. The management team is aware of its priorities for development and demonstrates through its response to previous reports and by its clear focus on outcome and impact that it has the capacity to improve further.