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A primary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

Oxford Brookes University works in partnership with about 500 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE), a 3-year undergraduate course and a work-based 4-year undergraduate course for practising teaching assistants. At the time of the inspection there were about 627 trainees on primary ITT courses.

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 revised report combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and of the management and quality assurance arrangements in 2005/06, with the judgements from the scrutiny of further evidence submitted to Ofsted in February 2008.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

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

Main inspection judgements

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

Key strengths

- the outstanding quality of the pre-course assessments and follow-up for successful candidates
- the excellent arrangements for identifying trainees' individual needs and providing for these effectively
- the outstanding coherence of the course exemplified by permeating coverage of cross-curricular elements, links between subjects and professional studies, and links between school-based and university-based training
- the very good work-based undergraduate course which is an excellent response to the need for initial teacher training for practising teaching assistants
- the excellent communications across the partnership
- the success of management in bringing about partnership staff co-operation, consistency and highly effective teamwork
- the high quality of monitoring and evaluation and the rapid attention and effective action taken when issues arise
- the depth of school-based trainers' knowledge about the courses and of trainees' previous experience and performance
- high quality and well differentiated training, excellent documentation and effective regional networks.

Points for consideration

- continuing to increase the recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. All courses are very well structured and their content enables the trainees to meet the Standards. There is a very good balance between centre-based and school-based training, and there are very clear references to the Standards in all elements of the course. There is excellent cohesion between all parts of the course including, taught sessions, school-based tasks, school experience and assignments. Courses make good references to the National Curriculum, the National Strategies and *Excellence and Enjoyment*. The work-based undergraduate course is an excellent initiative which enables teaching assistants to gain Qualified Teacher Status.

2. A strong feature of all courses is the emphasis on developing trainees' own subject knowledge. Handbooks clearly show course structure, and how progression is built into the programmes. Learning outcomes, identified for all modules, are clearly linked to the Standards. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) features strongly in all courses. The use of interactive whiteboards in centre-based sessions is very good and trainees are able to follow this up in school.

3. There is exceptional coherence between all aspects of the programmes, including professional studies, assignments and school-based work. There are strong links between all subjects. Joint planning sessions and work between different subject teams help to facilitate this. The use of cross-curricular approaches is a well-developed feature of the course. In particular links between the core subjects, professional studies and ICT are very effective. Attention is given to the teaching of pupils with English as an additional language and to those with learning difficulties. School-based tasks, with good focus on primary classroom practice, are linked very clearly to the assignments and referenced to the Standards. School-based tutors very effectively support trainees in the completion of these tasks. Core subject tutors also teach on professional studies modules, which gives them a good overview of the training. Trainees have a good sense of how the elements of their training fit together.

4. The training ensures that all trainees are confident and it is clear that they value the provision. Tutors are very well qualified and have suitable primary experience including recent teaching in schools. School-based training provides trainees with the opportunity to work with experienced subject leaders in planning. A wide range of resources are available to trainees in the university and schools. The use of the virtual learning environment to share session notes on the courses between staff and trainees is a considerable strength.

5. Arrangements to meet the individual needs of trainees are excellent. Trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards is very well monitored. Feedback is very good and the targets set for improvement are monitored and additional support given where necessary. Subject knowledge is audited thoroughly; additional taught sessions and workshops are used to help remedy weaknesses.

Management and quality assurance

6. The selection procedures are very successful in recruiting suitable trainees, and withdrawal rates are low. The criteria for each stage of the selection process are clear and ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and consistently. The consistency across all courses is a strong feature which reflects the good management and co-operative teamwork of both university and school-based staff. Staff from partnership schools who take part in interviewing are well-trained for this role. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that necessary checks are made before candidates are accepted onto courses.

7. The course prospectus and the university web site provide appropriate and detailed information for candidates and promote positive images to encourage as diverse a range of applicants as possible. The university has not been able to meet its target for minority ethnic recruitment. This is despite the use of a range of initiatives and the rigorous analysis of recruitment and withdrawal data. The recruitment of males is broadly in line with the national average.

8. An outstanding feature of the selection process is the use made of information obtained at interview and in selection tests to advise successful candidates of any identified weaknesses in experience or knowledge, and to ensure that they begin to remedy these weaknesses before the course. Each trainee receives a letter setting out pre-course targets and suggestions on how to meet them. In the core subjects, pre-course "booster" sessions are also provided. For the work-based undergraduate programme a useful preparatory course is provided. These very good arrangements dovetail effectively into the excellent provision for meeting individual needs during the courses.

9. Despite the large size and geographical spread of the partnership, the management and university staff have entered into a strong and effective co-operation with partnership schools. This is fostered through means such as visits by tutors to schools, excellent documentation, and thorough training of school-based staff, as well as through the very successful regionally-based school networks. School staff show an enthusiastic commitment to their partnership with the university. The research projects carried out within schools, and facilitated by university tutors, also contribute to the coherence and effectiveness of the partnership.

10. The partnership agreement is a clear and effective document which has been developed co-operatively by schools and the university. Arrangements for selecting appropriate schools are effective and the university shows a sensitive regard for any partner schools who may fall below the necessary standards for membership. Resources in the university are very good. They are plentiful, wide-ranging and readily accessible to trainees who can borrow items for use in schools easily and quickly. Partnership schools are also well resourced.

11. All staff and trainees are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Clear documentation sets out in some detail what school-based staff should do to enhance the training, and an outstanding feature is the level of detailed knowledge which school staff have about course content, directed tasks and assignments, and the current and past performance of trainees. This reflects well on the high quality of training for both mentors and class teachers. School staff have been involved with university staff in the production of mentor training materials such as CD-ROMs on how to give feedback to trainees and how to help good trainees to improve even further. Arrangements for the staff development of university tutors are appropriate and include induction for new staff, as well as peer observations.

12. Communications between university tutors, between tutors and trainees, and between school-based staff and university staff are excellent. They are exemplified by the use of the university's virtual learning environment by school staff as well as trainees; by the use of email to ensure rapid response to any issues which may arise; and the accessibility of university administrative and academic staff.

13. The management of primary initial teacher training and the leaders of each training programme have been successful in creating a shared culture within which excellent teamwork and co-operation between staff across courses and subjects has led to the provision of high quality training. The effective day-to-day management procedures and a committee structure which encourages school-based staff participation also enhance the quality of training through effective monitoring of its quality and quick action to improve any identified weaknesses.

14. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of training programmes are effective. All modules are evaluated by their leaders who use a range of evidence to write reviews which feed into the annual reviews of each of the three programmes. Policies on equal opportunities and the promotion of good race relations are monitored effectively at all levels of the partnership and course materials reveal a strong commitment to these policies.

15. Assessment processes are closely monitored. The moderation of the assessment of trainees' practical teaching within and across schools is thorough. In very small rural schools mentors from lead schools in the regional networks sometimes visit to observe trainees. External examiners observe a sample of trainees teaching. External examiners' reports are detailed and informed, and the university responds promptly to any issues identified.

16. A wide range of evaluative evidence from all trainees and all trainers is used by the university to judge the quality of its provision. The analysis of data, for example grade profiles, also informs evaluations of modules and programmes. Managers and leaders make realistic and accurate evaluations. The self-evaluation for this inspection was comprehensive, detailed and self-critical; inspectors agreed with its conclusions.

17. Annual programme reviews always lead to an action plan, and at module and subject level points for development are clearly identified and rapidly acted

upon. Action planning leads to effective improvements in training and the programme teams are all committed to course improvement. Sometimes action plans can be reactive rather than proactive, and tend to look only to the next year in the cycle. The university benchmarks itself against other providers by examining available national data and by regular dialogue with other regional providers.