

**Primary Initial Teacher Training Partnership  
based on**

**University of Newcastle upon Tyne**

**School of Education, Communications and  
Language Sciences  
St. Thomas' Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
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**A short inspection report  
2005/06**

**Managing Inspector: John Williams HMI**

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## Introduction

The University of Newcastle upon Tyne works in partnership with schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a one-year post graduate certificate in education (PGCE) course for training to teach in Key Stages 1 and 2. At the time of the inspection there were 103 trainees.

## 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**

- quick action and response to improve the quality of training
- the very good training opportunities provided by partnership schools
- the monitoring of trainees' progress and assessment against the Standards
- the effectiveness of the selection procedures in recruiting good quality trainees.

## **Points for consideration**

- monitoring the impact of the training on trainees' teaching
- considering the structure of the training to enable trainees to make better links between central and school-based training
- providing opportunities for tutors in the core subject to follow up issues identified by trainees and mentors during school placements
- involving partnership schools more in long-term development planning.

## The quality of training

1. The content and structure of the course meets the Requirements fully and all training is cross-referenced to the Standards. There is detailed and comprehensive coverage of the National Curriculum and Primary National Strategy, although references to the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage are limited. There have been improvements in course quality with greater consistency in training across core and foundation subjects. Revisions to course documentation and the development of an effective data base have greatly improved record keeping and tracking of trainees' progress.

2. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used very effectively to deliver and support the programme. The training in the core subjects has a good balance between theory and practice. In English, for example, elements of training provide the trainees with important insights into how best to use resources to plan, teach and evaluate their teaching. In mathematics there is a good balance of activities so that trainees benefit from lectures, workshops and self-study. Trainees appreciate the efforts of their science tutors to make the sessions of direct relevance to their teaching. However, the majority of central training takes place in the first ten weeks of the course and results in reduced opportunities for trainees to reflect on aspects of their training in the light of their school experience. The professional studies element of the course gives appropriate attention to areas such as teaching pupils for whom English is an additional language, those with special educational needs, and planning and assessment. Most of these sessions are taught by subject tutors promoting good coherence between professional and subject studies. A high quality resource centre at the university provides trainees with easy access to ample reference and practical materials.

3. Schools in the partnership provide very good training opportunities. They include designated training schools and those with a special skill, for example in dealing with social deprivation. The careful selection of mentors ensures that good primary practice is modelled and enables trainees to see effective teaching. However, mentors do not always have full awareness of centre-based training and time in school is spent gathering information about what it is the trainees have studied before setting targets.

4. Trainees audit their own subject knowledge in preparation for the course and progress is assessed soon after the start of the training. Trainees take the results of their audits to their school placements where they are discussed and monitored by the mentors, who provide good support to address identified weaknesses. Assignments and directed tasks enable trainees to reflect on their teaching and to develop their subject knowledge; these are assessed and trainees are given helpful feedback. Sometimes an opportunity for tutors to corroborate the trainees' own perceived progress against specific Standards is missed.

5. The procedures for the assessment of trainees against the Standards are rigorous. The trainees' progress is monitored and assessed effectively throughout

the course, with particularly good use made of a trainee database to track progress. Trainees methodically record their progress towards meeting the Standards during school-based training in a booklet well suited for this purpose. The booklet is understood and used well by all involved in the partnership. Targets are set and systematically reviewed on a weekly basis and tutorials focus appropriately on an analysis of strengths and areas for development, including actions for the coming week. The booklets also contain the trainees' own weekly self-reviews and their accuracy is endorsed by teacher tutors. Lesson observations, graded against a group of Standards, record the trainees' progress and identify strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes comments are too generic and do not make judgements about specific-subject teaching.

## **Management and quality assurance**

6. Recruitment targets for the cohort as a whole, and for numbers of men in particular, are met. All applicants from minority ethnic groups who meet the minimum requirements are interviewed; despite this, this recruitment target is not met. The partnership has long recognised its difficulty in recruiting trainees from minority ethnic groups and some worthwhile and determined efforts are being made to attract applications, including a research project to find solutions to this in the long term. Overall, the partnership has focused well on issues such as equal opportunities and race equality since the last inspection. Policies reflect the university's inclusive practice. There is effective monitoring of selection and interview processes, which includes feedback from candidates about their experiences. Course advertising understates its commitment to attract applications from those who are physically disabled or who have other disabilities such as dyslexia, or to describe how such trainees will be supported.

7. Arrangements for interviewing are good with school staff contributing well to the process. Successful candidates complete core subject and ICT audits and use these to set targets for improvement before the training begins. A comprehensive and up-to-date reading list is also provided. The partnership's decision to accept only those with honours degrees has improved the overall quality of the cohort. As a result, good, well-qualified trainees with good potential to succeed are recruited.

8. Documentation to support the training is helpful and informative and attention has been paid to clarity and thoroughness. Management responsibilities in schools are clearly designated: mentors are responsible for the trainees in their charge and school coordinators are responsible for all trainees in their schools. School staff meet regularly in cluster groups, of around eight schools, chaired by university tutors or senior partnership staff from training schools. Issues are then reported to the university's board of studies. The system relies heavily on an effective primary PGCE programme leader and the steering group formed by the chairpersons of each cluster group. This arrangement works well in identifying and bringing about changes to enhance the quality of the course.

9. An effective partnership agreement makes reference to the principles for the design and management of the course and quality control procedures. Usefully, trainees' responsibilities are also included. All in the partnership are clear about their role in the training. Schools are selected or de-selected on clear and appropriate criteria. Partnership schools provide very good training bases and there is considerable commitment from school staff to the partnership. Effective working relationships exist throughout the partnership. Course coherence has been improved by achieving a better balance between permanent university staff and visiting tutors who offer recent and relevant expertise in the classroom. Even so, the structure does place constraints on the time allocated for subject tutors which adversely affects their opportunity to follow up issues identified by trainees and mentors during school placements and to provide a strategic view of course development.

10. Overall, the management and deployment of resources contribute significantly to the quality of the training. Teaching resources at the centre are extensive and of a high quality; trainees are encouraged to borrow and use them in their placements. However, the partnership has not been successful in addressing the issue of access, adequate heating and ventilation, and limited facilities for trainers and trainees alike at the university.

11. Trainees report formally at the end of each placement on the impact of their training in both the university and in schools. The equal opportunities sub-committee meets to discuss any issues arising from trainees' evaluations, including race relations. Tutors observe each other's, and visiting lecturers and teachers, sessions. Trainee evaluations inform course planning and provide data regarding the quality of training in schools and at the centre. Training in schools is also monitored through joint lesson observations, and cluster meetings are used to inform management on the quality of training. Although data collection contributes to judgements about the quality of training, not all is formally recorded and a more rigorous analysis would pinpoint where training has an impact on the quality of trainees' teaching. Internal and external moderation procedures provide valuable insights into how well the course is managed. Cross-school moderations are seen by schools as being particularly effective.

12. In response to the previous inspection the university drafted an action plan which addressed each of the points identified for consideration and action. Other evaluation sources, such as external examiners' reports and minutes from cluster group meetings provide evidence and suggestions for improvement for the short term. Issues are addressed very promptly to improve provision. These evidence bases are not yet brought together with benchmarking to produce an overall partnership development plan. Schools, whilst fully committed to the partnership and who are very happy with the way operational issues are dealt with so promptly, would welcome more opportunity to play a part in the longer-term strategic development of the partnership.