

North East Partnership

School of Health, Community and Education Studies
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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The North East Partnership works in partnership with 24 schools to provide a secondary initial teacher training (ITT) course in physical education for the 11-18 age range. The course leads to the awards of PGCE and qualified teacher status (QTS). At the time of the inspection there were 25 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 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 rigour of the selection procedures
- the attention paid to identifying trainees' individual needs from an early stage and monitoring their progress throughout the course
- the management of provision to support outstanding training and good quality outcomes
- the rigorous procedures to ensure trainers have the knowledge, skills and understanding to discharge their roles successfully
- the internal and external moderation procedures to ensure the consistency and accuracy of assessment
- the high quality of the improvement planning.

Points for consideration

- introducing a more systematic approach for trainees to evaluate the quality of their school-based training in professional studies.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The programme is very well planned to ensure that trainees meet the Standards. Modules in professional and curriculum studies prepare trainees very well for their school placements. Topics covered in professional studies are developed well in the subject context, and very good use is made of directed tasks in school; this helps trainees to link theory with practice and to develop as reflective practitioners.
2. A particular strength of the course is the way in which gaps in trainees' subject knowledge are targeted at an early stage. This has led to a decision to dedicate more time to developing trainees' knowledge of gymnastics and dance. Additional courses, in individual sports and activities, help to strengthen trainees' knowledge and confidence to teach in schools. Good attention is given to developing trainees' understanding of the complex relationship between planning, learning outcomes, assessment and evaluation of pupils' learning. An early introduction to assessment for learning has helped trainees to appreciate the importance of ongoing assessment.
3. Two contrasting school placements provide trainees with a very good range of experiences. Careful attention is given to allocating trainees to schools so that they teach all areas of the National Curriculum and a range of qualifications. The structure of the first school experience allows trainees to build up their skills and confidence gradually by working alongside experienced teachers and with small groups before they teach solo. It is also designed to ensure the trainees work towards achieving selected Standards while allowing them to progress according to their personal needs.
4. Central training prepares trainees well for school experiences and any concerns about the impact of school-based training on trainees' progress are very quickly identified and acted upon. Schools set trainees high expectations and trainees are very positive about the support they receive. Since the last inspection better resources in schools and improved training for mentors have helped to ensure trainees have appropriate opportunities to develop their use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their teaching. Trainees find the use of video to analyse their own teaching very valuable.
5. Improving consistency in the quality of mentors' training sessions and of lesson observation has been a development priority for the partnership and this has been addressed successfully. In particular, mentors' feedback is more focused on trainees' planning and on their use of learning outcomes for assessment. Mentors' annotation of trainees' planning is a strong feature in helping trainees to improve. There is a very good focus on preparing trainees to use a range of teaching styles. On occasion, the planning of a few trainees shows an over-reliance on open-ended styles in gymnastics, and too little attention is given to the specific skills to be learnt for composing and performing challenging sequences.

6. The course structure allows sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual trainees whatever their starting point. Identification of needs begins at the selection stage, where personalised pre-course tasks are set. Careful monitoring of trainees' needs continues throughout the course and is an outstanding feature.

7. The monitoring of trainees' progress towards the Standards works exceptionally well. Trainees are encouraged and supported well in taking responsibility for their own development. Most targets set during mentor meetings are specific, challenging and time-related. Trainees maintain a well organised professional progress file which records evidence of their progress towards and achievement of the Standards.

8. The entire process of assessment is transparent and works exceptionally well. Arrangements for the interim and final assessment of trainees against the Standards are thorough and understood by all. Over recent years, the partnership has worked assiduously to improve the consistency of assessment across schools. This has improved as a result of clearer guidance and support. Trainees are central to the process and take responsibility for monitoring their achievements against the Standards. They are encouraged to benchmark their progress at the interim part of the second placement and this is formally linked to the review process. The use of a seven-point scale challenges trainees to work towards the award of merit and distinction. Particularly good use is made of joint observations for moderation, as well as for mentor training and overall quality assurance.

Management and quality assurance

9. The previous good quality of the management and quality assurance procedures has been further improved and is now judged to be outstanding.

10. Selection procedures are comprehensive and effective. All statutory requirements are met. A particular strength of the rigorous interview process is the use of a teaching episode in a partnership school to assess applicants' potential and their relationships with pupils. Partnership school staff are fully involved in interviews. The ICT audit probes applicants' understanding of teaching and learning in physical education. Almost all trainees recruited are given conditional offers despite their strengths. Rigorous checks are made to verify the completion of tasks, which require trainees to produce reflective responses in preparation for discussion at the start of the course. New procedures to involve current trainees in the process provide them with good professional development. Many interviews also involve an additional person to assure the quality of the procedures.

11. Clear and detailed information for applicants is provided. A very wide range of short and long term strategies, including targeted taster courses, pre-application advisory sessions and the use of a promotional CD-ROM, is used to encourage diversity in recruitment. Arrangements are made for those with specific learning difficulties to assist them in the interview process. Four years ago the target for

minority ethnic recruitment was met but, despite the partnership's energetic efforts, it has not been able to repeat this on a regular basis. The provider is successful in recruiting a good gender balance, a wide age range and trainees who will need support in order to achieve their potential. Withdrawal rates are extremely low and employment rates on completion are very high.

12. The partnership is very well managed by a range of committees, which have been streamlined following the last inspection. Partnership school staff, and past and present trainees are well represented on committees. All partnership schools provide very good venues for training. They are selected against rigorous criteria and are deselected if they fail to meet them. For example, one school which did not meet deadlines for a placement report was not granted a further placement that year. New schools in the partnership are placed on trial for the first year after which the quality of their provision is reviewed against the selection criteria. Rigorous departmental audits are well used to match trainees to placements which address gaps in their individual action plans.

13. The partnership agreement is simple and effective. It is well referenced to other course documentation. It includes the university equal opportunities policy and how this will be applied and monitored. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and set high expectations of trainers and trainees. The majority of trainers far exceed these expectations and all play a role in quality assurance. As the course has developed, the range of their responsibilities has been adapted well to course needs. The group leader has a very detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of all those involved in the training and this is used very well to prioritise additional responsibilities for some and to provide support for others. For example, two experienced link tutors have assumed additional responsibilities to support those in new roles. Good use is made of frequent joint observations of trainees' lessons as a professional development opportunity. These strategies ensure that best practice is shared across the partnership and that the assessment of trainees is consistent. Regular mentor training meetings serve as an additional means of spreading good practice and are well attended. Commitment to improvement is very strong. All trainers discharge their roles successfully.

14. Resources in the partnership schools are audited and funding is well planned to ensure consistency. Priorities for development are determined through course review and risk assessment procedures. Schools are invited to bid for funding to enhance the quality of their training. As a result, weaker areas of training have been considerably strengthened; for example, the use of ICT to support the development of specific physical education skills.

15. The course complies with university-wide procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of equal opportunities and race relations policies and no issues of concern have been identified. Completion rates show that trainees from different groups of learners are not disadvantaged. Course records are maintained to identify trends, but there is no tracking of the proportion of trainees from different groups who progress from application to completion of the course. Procedures for trainees causing concern are clear.

16. The group leader is fully aware of the quality of different aspects of the training programmes and concerns are quickly addressed. Trainees' central subject and professional studies evaluations, monitoring reports and the exceptionally detailed placement reports are discussed with school-based trainers, who are keen to receive feedback. Although in many schools trainees evaluate the quality of the training in professional studies, this is not done systematically across the partnership.

17. Link tutors moderate mentors' judgements about the Standards and, where there are any concerns about inconsistency between schools, they make additional visits. Documentation provides clear and comprehensive guidance about assessment. For final assessment link tutors agree specific Standards against which to moderate and standardise judgements; this system is very effective. Assignments are thoroughly marked and moderated by experienced tutors. The subject-specific external examiner samples and confirms all judgements.

18. Monitoring information and benchmarking evidence are effectively used to produce an annual report for discussion by the management committee. Risk assessment considers recruitment, quality, retention, minority ethnic targets, availability of placements and staff expertise across the partnership. These considerations inform development priorities which provide a framework for the group manager's work. At the end of the year there is a comprehensive course review, which leads to improvement.