

Secondary Initial Teacher Training
Partnership based on

Bath Spa University

Newton Park
Newton St Loe
Bath
BA2 9BN

A full inspection report
2005/06

Managing Inspector:
Eileen Hill Additional Inspector

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Introduction

Bath Spa University worked in partnership with 158 schools in 2005/6 to provide secondary (11-16) and Key Stage 2/3 initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers courses in art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, mathematics, music, physical education, religious education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 230 trainees on the two programmes.

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 full 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

Standards achieved by the trainees: Grade 3

Quality of training: Grade 3

Management and quality assurance: Grade 3

The provider will receive a full inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the strong and developing partnership with schools and the quality and extent of training for mentors
- the school-based professional studies programme
- the use and impact of resources to support the training and bring about improvements.

Points for action

- bringing about greater consistency in the quality of central training through regular monitoring
- ensuring that trainees learn how to plan lessons with suitable learning objectives, to evaluate teaching and learning and that they develop their skills in assessment
- clarifying the lines of communication between strategic and operational management
- providing a clearer line management link between programme leaders and course tutors.

Points for consideration

- improving the consistency in procedures for assessing and monitoring the subject knowledge of trainees and for assessing trainees against the Standards
- improving the quality and consistency of subject documentation.

Standards achieved by trainees

1. The standards achieved by trainees in mathematics were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection; they have now improved and are at least satisfactory.
2. The trainees have satisfactory expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. They develop constructive relationships with pupils and with school and university staff, and offer good role models to their pupils through their professional demeanour and their own values and practices. Trainees demonstrate a consistent commitment to teaching and are highly motivated; most involve themselves fully in the life of the schools. They write powerful and insightful reflections on their teaching, but daily evaluations often lack detail and most trainees are unable to see clearly the connection between what they have taught and what the pupils have learnt.
3. Trainees on both programmes have secure knowledge, understanding and skills in their specialist subjects, sufficient to teach to Key Stage 4. In some subjects, such as mathematics and design and technology, significant value is added to the trainees' knowledge by the training programmes. Knowledge and skills in the use of ICT to support teaching are variable, but always sufficiently sound to support subject teaching at a basic level. Outstanding use of ICT was seen in geography and mathematics.
4. Regular planning, both medium and short term, is a consistent feature of the trainees' teaching, with most lesson plans based on a three-part model. Trainees' understanding of the purposes of starter and plenary activities is too variable, with some uncertainty about what makes for good quality short teaching episodes; this sometimes leads to a lack of variety in teaching strategies. Trainees have a limited understanding of how to set out learning objectives, and so they often plan tasks for pupils to complete, rather than what they intend pupils to learn. Related to this, a minority of trainees fails to make the connection between planning and the assessment of pupils' progress. Trainees usually plan for the less able pupils in their groups, but rarely take account of the needs of the more able.
5. The quality of trainees' teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons involve a good range of activities and most trainees manage points of transition between these skilfully. Trainees understand issues of inclusion and good examples were seen in geography and physical education of how to make tasks and content more accessible to a range of pupils.
6. The trainees manage the behaviour of their pupils well. In a minority of lessons, the management of time is an issue and this sometimes leads to low expectations and unsatisfactory progress by pupils.

The quality of training

7. On both the Key Stage 2/3 and secondary courses an effective balance is struck between the university-based and school-based training and the timing of training activities usually works well. However, the expectation that secondary trainees will assess the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning is left too late in the final teaching practice and this limits the level at which they achieve the Standards in this area.

8. The courses are based upon a strong partnership between the university and a diverse range of schools, spread over a wide geographical area. This range provides good opportunities for trainees to experience different settings and approaches to teaching their subject. In addition, the trainees gain experience of the partnership schools which host the training in "Perspectives and Professional Values and Practice." This is a very strong element of the training; it is well organised by the professional tutors and draws upon the expertise of school-based and other local staff, such as headteachers from partner schools and local authority advisors.

9. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements to the subject studies programmes to ensure that these are up-to-date and relevant. Nonetheless, some of the supporting documentation is muddled and complicated. The design and technology programme provides access to CAD/CAM, and there are opportunities for work with ICT in a number of subjects, including geography and music. All subject programmes cover the key elements of the subject and also include coverage of the relevant National Strategies. While the quality of external contributions to both the central and school-based training is often good, the focus and pace of sessions are sometimes unsatisfactory.

10. There is good coherence between the various elements of the course with improvements made over the year. Specific school-based tasks provide a focus for some aspects of the school-based training and help the trainees to deepen their understanding; for example, of how teaching assistants can be deployed effectively within science. There is also a programme to support the weekly meetings between trainees and their tutors; this links well with the central training and provides a useful steer for these meetings.

11. All course tutors are knowledgeable subject specialists. The best university-based subject training is challenging, inspiring and at the cutting edge of new knowledge and developments; the tutors in these subjects model effective practice in their own teaching and make this explicit to their trainees. Such high quality is not maintained consistently across all subjects and, in a small number of subjects, the training lacks intellectual challenge and pace and too little is expected of the trainees.

12. During the course of the inspection the university has done much to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the school-based trainers and, as a result, they now have a good understanding of what is expected of them.

13. The process for identifying trainees' needs and responding to these has improved since the last inspection, although the effectiveness of subject knowledge auditing and development varies. While in some subjects, such as religious education, the process is rigorous and thorough, in others, such as English, too much reliance is placed on the trainees' self-evaluation of their needs.

14. The monitoring of trainees' progress is thorough and has improved since the last inspection. Trainees' tutorials with course tutors are used well for tracking progress, particularly in relation to the development of subject knowledge. The requirement for trainees to prepare for their weekly meetings with their mentors is an effective means of strengthening the focus on the Standards. The weekly record form used during these meetings supports the identification of relevant training activities and the setting of specific targets, which are explicitly linked to the Standards. Effective arrangements are in place to identify and support trainees who are at risk of failure.

15. The assessment of the trainees' achievements against the Standards is accurate and judgements about the pass/fail border are secure. Mentors and professional tutors fully understand their responsibility for the assessment of trainees and the assessment systems operate effectively and consistently across the partnership. However, the reports on the trainees at the end of the first teaching practice led to some confusion because they did not always contain sufficient information on strengths and weaknesses and sometimes graded the trainees too generously. Guidance issued by the university during the year helped to resolve the confusion. Arrangements for paired observations in schools, which were not working well at the time of the last inspection, are now effective and are useful both for moderating judgements and building mentors' confidence in the accuracy of their assessments. Arrangements for the external moderation of trainees' standards, of individual subject courses and of the whole programme are appropriate and provide useful feedback to course managers.

Management and quality assurance

16. Selection procedures are implemented thoroughly. The provider has a flexible recruitment policy and often recruits trainees with non-standard degrees, usually in shortage subjects. Where relevant, such trainees undertake a two-year course, to bring subject knowledge up to a satisfactory level. Booster courses are offered in shortage subjects and they are often used imaginatively to prepare trainees in their specialist subjects. The provider continues to meet its targets for the recruitment of minority ethnic trainees and those from other underrepresented groups. Intake and destination data are monitored and withdrawal rates are low.

Few trainees fail to achieve qualified teacher status although in the shortage subjects in particular achievement against the Standards is often modest.

17. In response to the 2004/05 inspection, all subjects now make an initial assessment of trainees at the selection stage and set development activities in preparation for the training course. The quality of these arrangements differs between subjects for the current trainees, with very good practice in design and technology, geography and religious education, but limited attention to the needs of individuals in physical education. All subjects have reviewed their arrangements for 2006/07.

18. Partnership arrangements have been considerably strengthened this year, following the previous inspection report. In particular, procedures have been made clearer and expectations on mentors and professional tutors are more consistent and robust. Good quality training has been provided for mentors and professional tutors. Attendance at training events has been excellent and, where it has proved difficult for staff to attend, tutors have made separate visits to schools. The partnership office has been strengthened by the appointment of additional staff. The new schools' liaison officer has been very successful in improving communications with schools; improved administrative support has also resulted in more efficient arrangements for school placements, so that trainees and schools receive adequate notice of what is happening. Arrangements are now in place to monitor the school-based professional studies programme to ensure greater consistency in the delivery of training by outside speakers.

19. Policies on equality of opportunity and race relations are implemented and monitored effectively. Improved communications between the centre and partnership schools ensure that trainees receive a fair entitlement and that where there is discrimination, abuse or special needs, an appropriate response is made.

20. Over the course of the year significant and necessary improvements have been made to the leadership and management of the training programmes. The recovery action group, led by one of the deputy vice chancellors, has been instrumental in effecting rapid and sustainable developments. The management structure for the programmes has been reviewed so that programme leaders now have more appropriate involvement and responsibility. The terms of reference for all partnership boards and committees have been revised, making their purpose and function clearer. These changes have had a noticeable impact on the programme leaders, who welcome the additional responsibility. Course tutors perceive clearer and more efficient lines of communication and a quicker response to issues that arise. The partnership now has a much clearer sense of direction and this is recognised by both central and school-based staff. The separation of strategic and operational management, brought about as a result of restructuring, continues to affect the clarity of planning and decision making at the centre, with too many strategic initiatives generated in isolation from those with the responsibility for implementing them. Line management responsibilities are confused, with no clear link between the management role of the programme leaders and the subject tutors. Existing management arrangements are under review, awaiting the appointment of

a new dean of education, a new post designed to bring greater coherence to the work of the school of education.

21. This year, significant improvements have been made in monitoring and overseeing the quality of school-based training, such that the training and support for trainees are now consistently effective. The arrangements for monitoring the variable quality of the delivery of central training are still not sufficiently sharp. The provider does not have procedures for the observation and evaluation of such training by senior managers and relies on peer appraisal and trainee questionnaires, which have not proved successful in the past in pinpointing weaknesses.

22. Resources to support the training are deployed effectively. The new course leaders for mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education have received good support from more experienced tutors, acting as mentors. They have also been linked with course leaders from other universities. The impact of this support on the confidence of the course leaders, and indirectly on the quality of training, particularly in mathematics, is significant. Considerable resources have been put into mentor training and this has had a noticeable impact. A new training centre was opened over the course of the year which enables course tutors to work and meet together. This too has proved valuable in promoting greater consistency and sharing of practices. In all other respects, resources in the schools and the university are good and used well to support the training.

23. Assessment processes have been significantly improved. While subject tutors sometimes interpret the procedures differently, they are nevertheless carefully and rigorously implemented and lead to secure judgements at the pass/fail border. Effective use is made of external examiners. The level descriptors are used effectively by mentors and lead to largely accurate judgements. Joint observations of trainees' teaching are made by subject tutors and mentors and arrangements are in place for internal moderation of assessments across the subjects.

24. Over the course of this year, the provider has reviewed and evaluated all aspects of its provision. Action plans have been drawn up by all subject leaders, by programme leaders and by the recovery action group. These plans are carefully monitored and include success criteria and dates for achievement. At the time of the last inspection, annual course reviews were of very variable quality and the process of course review ineffective. Improvements to the process are now in train and the early drafts of new procedures suggest a more rigorous and consistent approach to annual review and evaluation.

25. Arrangements to further develop benchmarking are underway. The provider has forged links with similar providers and with other providers in the south west in order to draw upon a wide range of relevant data for comparison.