

Secondary Initial Teacher Training
Partnership based on

Chiltern Training Group

Challney High School for Boys
Stoney Gate Road
Luton
LU4 9JT

A full inspection report
2005/06

Managing Inspector:
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Introduction

The Chiltern Training Group works in partnership with 15 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers PGCE courses in art, business studies, design and technology, English, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education, music and science. At the time of the inspection there were 42 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 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 2

Quality of training: Grade 2

Management and quality assurance: Grade 2

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the recruitment of trainees who are highly committed to teaching and bring with them a good range of experience
- a cohesive group of schools, which collaborate well to deliver training in a coherent way
- a high level of commitment to the training programme by mentors, professional tutors and headteachers
- good quality central training
- regular and frequent meetings of all those involved in training
- effective school-based training, with regular formal feedback, and a clear focus on lesson planning to help pupils make progress
- effective management and quality assurance procedures, which ensure that all partners share an understanding of what is required and maintain a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

Points for action

- ensuring trainees use a wider range of strategies for assessment and use assessment to plan for learners' differing needs.

Points for consideration

enabling all trainees to:

- demonstrate good knowledge of their subject
- communicate more effectively in written and spoken English in all school situations
- plan effectively for working with support staff.

Standards achieved by trainees

1. The trainees show high levels of respect and consideration for their pupils, and a strong commitment to promoting learning and achievement. They set pupils high expectations for behaviour and listening to each other, instilling positive values through their teaching. Trainees make a good contribution to the wider life of their school, for example to extra-curricular, cross-curricular and personal, social, health and citizenship programmes. They form good relationships with staff in their placement schools.
2. Trainees have high expectations of themselves and are well motivated to succeed. Trainees' ability to improve their teaching through evaluation is good. In many subjects, trainees' evaluation has improved significantly over the year. Self-evaluations by physical education trainees, for example, are very honest, pertinent, and well focused on pupils' progress. Music, design and technology, ICT and geography trainees understand what makes teaching good, having had plentiful opportunities to observe good practice by experienced teachers. A small number of weaker trainees do not reflect in depth on their own teaching.
3. Trainees' knowledge and understanding of their subject range considerably across the 12 subject areas. Subject knowledge covers the breadth of the subject, usually as a result of very good personal effort by trainees, effective training and careful monitoring. Subject knowledge is often a strength for the majority of trainees. However, for a few there are weaker features which impact upon the quality of their teaching; for example, incorrect terminology is used in business studies lessons and mathematics trainees lack secure knowledge of data handling and statistics. A small number of trainees do not always communicate clearly and appropriately when speaking English.
4. Trainees not only have a good knowledge of the National Curriculum, examination specifications and assessment requirements for the key stages for which they are training to teach, but also develop a secure understanding of the continuum of learning, through experience of the preceding and following key stages. Good pedagogical knowledge makes trainees' teaching lively and effective. They know how to apply ICT to teaching their subject and they make good use of their own and pupils' experience to enliven lessons. Trainees know how to help pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to make progress, and many show a very good understanding of the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those learning English as an additional language.
5. Planning is good overall, with various strengths in different subjects. In food technology, trainees' plans indicate how specific Standards are to be addressed in a particular lesson. In English and science, trainees use the new planning form well to set clear lesson objectives in terms of learning outcomes for knowledge, skills, understanding and values, and then evaluate the outcomes.

6. Trainees' manifest passion and commitment often make their teaching highly engaging. Strengths of teaching include good class management based on very strong relationships, the confident use of varied strategies and well designed homework tasks. They create imaginative resources, especially in English, science and modern foreign languages. Activities such as games which motivate and challenge are used well in music and mathematics. Many trainees make good cross-curricular links: for example, a mathematics trainee introduced spiritual, moral and cultural elements into a lesson about Pythagoras, and a food and textiles trainee developed pupils' awareness of economic well-being and healthy living through compelling examples.

7. Whilst trainees meet the Standards for the assessment of pupils' progress, there is too much variation in this area of their work. Some trainees make good use of accurate assessment to plan effectively and this is a particular strength in physical education. Marking is very good in English. Many trainees evaluate pupils' progress effectively within the lesson, and adapt accordingly. However, assessment is weaker in some subjects. A few trainees, for example in mathematics, do not systematically record pupils' progress or use this assessment as a basis for future planning. Some do not practise a sufficiently wide range of assessment strategies, beyond watching pupils at work and asking occasional questions.

8. Trainees manage very effectively the pace, timing and organisation of activities. Pupils respond well to their lively and interesting lessons, and occasional misbehaviour is dealt with effectively. Trainees assess risk and take good account of health and safety requirements.

9. Trainees make their lessons accessible to all the pupils they teach. Notably in physical education they take very good account of individual factors, differentiating by task or equipment for higher-attaining pupils and those with other specific needs. In design and technology and music, trainees show forethought by providing appropriately differentiated resources or tasks. In English, trainees cater well for the interests of both boys and girls. Many trainees plan and manage the deployment of support staff purposefully, but this varies across subjects.

The quality of training

10. The course is well structured and coherent. Trainees have good access to the age range for which they are training and have experience of the previous and later key stages. The content of central training courses, in both professional studies and subjects, is relevant and is regularly updated to cover new developments, for example in the national strategies. All training is carefully mapped against the Standards, and offers progressive challenge. School-based training is planned to develop elements of central training coherently, and the consortium's training diary indicates clearly what training should be covered, when and by whom. Placements offer opportunities for trainees to observe, teach and assess across the full range of ages and ability, including pupils with learning

difficulties and disabilities and pupils from a range of diverse backgrounds. Additional placements, for example primary experience for trainees on the 11-16 route, are methodically planned, implemented and monitored.

11. School-based trainers are well guided by the comprehensive week-by-week diary and by monthly generic and subject team meetings for trainers. All documentation is clear and well understood by all partners. The consortium lesson-planning form encourages trainees to focus on pupils' learning outcomes; another strength is its emphasis on trainees' identification not just of the knowledge, skills and concepts to be taught, but also of values.

12. Training is effective because it is the result of a thorough and corporate effort between schools to ensure that trainees meet the Standards well. Central professional training models good practice and central subject training is very well delivered. A range of expert teachers, and other invited specialists, contribute to the weekly sessions, and trainees in the main respond very positively. They are also well supported by school-based trainers, especially their highly committed mentors, who understand and build well upon central training. Most trainees are placed in subject departments with good capacity to train and which offer good models, for example, in the range of teaching and learning strategies which are used. Trainees receive formal training and helpful feedback on lesson observations each week from their mentors, and have valuable regular contact with professional tutors. Trainees have substantial opportunities to plan, teach and assess independently across a range of contexts. However, there is variation in the quality of planning for assessment across host departments in consortium schools and this leads to shortcomings in trainees' assessment skills.

13. The majority of subject coordinators are highly effective in leading the subject training. Subject knowledge audits are generally effective in identifying gaps, and mentors plan for progressive development of trainees' subject knowledge over the year. In the best cases, trainees receive highly personalised subject training; for example, in physical education they are matched to placements where trainers' expertise counterbalances the trainees' weakness highlighted at selection. Most mentors monitor their trainees' developing subject knowledge well, using clearly structured training plans. However, occasionally audits lead to unmanageable targets, or action plans do not contain clear milestones for mentors to check. Mentors monitor trainees' progress towards the Standards carefully and training is adapted to meet emerging needs. Workshops on using ICT in teaching have usefully developed trainees' teaching skills and confidence. Marking rightly pays good attention to the accuracy of written English: poorly written assignments are required to be resubmitted. Trainers work hard to meet trainees' individual needs and in the great majority of cases do this well.

14. Assessment procedures are clear and well understood by all involved. In addition to regular formal feedback, trainees receive clear written feedback at four progress review points. These ensure that trainees have a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses and the next steps they should take. Arrangements for moderation are good, with professional tutors also involved in making classroom

observations. Visiting training support tutors make a significant impact on their termly visits, leaving trainees and school-based trainers with accurate assessment against the Standards. The double marking of assignments against clear criteria further supports standardisation of assessment across the consortium. Mentors meet in subject teams on a monthly basis to discuss the assessment of particular tasks and Standards.

15. There are secure arrangements for final assessment. Subject specialists visit trainees near the end of the course to observe teaching and scrutinise portfolio evidence. Their report, reviewed alongside the judgements of mentors and professional tutors, plays a key role in determining the final pass/fail judgements on trainees at the borderline. This process is rigorous.

Management and quality assurance

16. The consortium is successful in recruiting committed and enthusiastic trainees, appropriately qualified and often with a range of relevant prior experience. As a result of good selection procedures the course has a high retention rate, and the majority of trainees go on to first appointments in consortium schools. Information about the course is clear. Strong equality policies underpin all aspects of the work of the consortium and new promotional material reflects powerfully the rich diversity of trainees' backgrounds.

17. The course is well managed. The training consortium comprises the majority of Luton secondary schools and a small number of schools in neighbouring Bedfordshire. This diverse, yet cohesive, partnership provides good opportunities for trainees to access a range of experience, potentially across four key stages, and across good schools of different composition and organisation. Where schools lie beyond Luton local authority, good efforts are made to ensure that all partners are kept up-to-date with developments. Partnership arrangements are clearly set out in documentation and colleagues show a strong commitment to the consortium. The University of Luton plays an active role in the consortium, including chairing the quality steering group and there are also strong links with the local authority and the sixth form college. These partners contribute towards the training, providing a range of staffing and resources, and fulfil management and quality assurance roles. Roles and responsibilities are clear and the management structure is effective. Communication within the consortium is good, and the provider is very well served by an efficient and knowledgeable course administrator. Regular bulletins and email communication support a cohesive and active network.

18. A strength of the partnership is the regular monthly meetings for mentors and professional tutors, which enable school-based trainers to develop their roles. A recent successful example of this good management practice is the improvement of lesson planning; school-based trainers worked together to learn how to focus trainees' evaluations more clearly on pupils' learning outcomes. New mentors are

trained promptly and effectively and alternative arrangements to follow up absentees are very thorough and efficient.

19. Course managers have recognised that, whilst the great majority of subject leaders are very skilful and committed, there is still some variation in quality across the team. Over the course of the year the provider has developed good systems for monitoring the quality of central training programmes and enabling subject leaders to share good practice. The continuing improvement of subject training is rightly identified as a priority in the three-year development plan. Arrangements for the induction of new subject coordinators are informal, but the course director ensures that a blend of meetings and shadowing leads to effective transition.

20. The consortium operates amongst schools with high levels of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, language and culture. Equality issues are taken very seriously, and good race relations are promoted by all consortium schools. Incidents of harassment are rare, and are taken very seriously. Trainees from a range of backgrounds are well supported in their placement schools.

21. In response to recommendations in the previous inspection report, significant improvements have been made in measures to monitor the quality of school-based training. Guidance for mentors and professional tutors is provided in very good handbooks, and good practice is shared through the regular meetings. Professional tutors monitor the quality of mentoring and promote a consistent approach to assessing trainees by undertaking joint observations of trainees at a relatively early point in the year. The establishment of a group of training support tutors has led to the early identification of concerns regarding the quality of school-based training. Their visits to placement schools, resulting in highly detailed reports which are monitored by the course director, ensure a cohesive and very efficient approach to quality assurance. These tutors visit on a termly basis and their thorough approach is valued by trainees, mentors and professional tutors. The course has two external examiners, who take their responsibilities seriously and provide useful reports following visits to trainees and training events.

22. The consortium's two management and quality assurance groups meet regularly and bring about a high degree of cohesion between local partners. Accurate and full annual reporting ensures that all partners are fully informed of developments.

23. The provider has recognised the difficulties of fully involving the very few schools outside the borough, where distances are greater and elements of provision different. Good measures are in place to ensure that mentors and professional tutors receive all appropriate information, and visits by training support tutors ensure participation at all levels by these schools.

24. Regular evaluation of the course by trainees is a strong feature of the course, and trainees are represented on both quality groups. Mentors and professional tutors review course development through the monthly meetings. The consortium is working to a three-year strategic plan, and this has been effectively

reviewed and updated in the course of this year. Parallel review and development planning at subject level, introduced in the course of the year, also supports future improvement. The provider responds fully to external advice and inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement.