



Further Education Teacher Training

University of Sunderland

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Inspection report  
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Managing Inspector:  
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## The inspection

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004
2. It was conducted in two phases by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated full-time pre-service provision at the university and also the part-time in-service course run by four of the partnership colleges, validated by the University of Sunderland. They focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2005. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2006.

## Background

3. The University of Sunderland offers a full-time pre-service certificate in education/post-graduate certificate in education (Cert Ed/PGCE), with cohorts starting in either September or January. In addition, it works with thirteen further education (FE) colleges, who deliver a part-time in-service teacher training course. The course modules are the same for pre-and in-service. The Cert Ed/PGCE is an endorsed qualification and satisfies the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers.
4. The university also offers certificates in adult literacy, numeracy and English as a second language (ESOL). These programmes were not inspected but the literacy and numeracy courses were reviewed by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in 2004 as part of a national survey on Skills for Life.
5. The university has been involved in the part-time in-service Cert Ed/PGCE for thirteen years and the full-time pre-service for three years. The part-time in-service programme has grown from a ten-college partnership in 2000 with approximately 450 places to a thirteen-college partnership in 2005 offering around 1,000 places. The pre-service full-time pathway has grown from 18 places in 2002 to over 70 in 2005.

## Effectiveness of provision

6. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees make good progress and are adept at lesson planning and using a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment methods. They work hard and effectively to help their students to succeed and they can apply theory learnt on the

course to their practice. Trainees benefit from very good support from teacher trainers who, in the main, are models of good practice. The full-time pre-service course is particularly good. Within this large and complex partnership, practice in the colleges, where most part-time in-service trainees are based, varies too much in relation to ensuring that all trainees have a sufficiently broad range of teaching opportunities. In addition, the use of progress reviews to monitor trainees' progress is inconsistent. However, with just a few exceptions, both in-service and pre-service trainees benefit from a strong, cohesive and well led partnership, that demonstrates a commitment to continuing improvement.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- Confident trainees who make good progress, plan their lessons well and are successful in using a wide range of teaching and learning methods
- A well-designed Cert Ed/PGCE programme that provides a good balance of theory and practice and meets the needs of trainees on both pre- and in-service programmes, working across a range of different contexts
- Opportunities for trainees to undertake teaching qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL while completing their Cert Ed/PGCE
- Many highly skilled, enthusiastic teacher trainers who model good practice and provide trainees with very good support
- Very good provision for university based pre-service trainees
- A strong and successful partnership, well led and managed by the university, with effective involvement of partnership members and cohesive team working
- An established ethos of continual improvement, with comprehensive procedures for developing and quality assuring the programmes

## Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- The limited range of teaching and assessment opportunities for some trainees
- The inconsistent use of progress reviews to set trainees challenging targets that draw on tutors' feedback and trainees' self-evaluation
- The low take-up of some mentor training events

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

## Achievement of trainees

7. Trainees from a wide range of contexts, including FE colleges, work-based learning providers, police training centres, the YMCA and school sixth forms, reach a level of teaching competence that is at least satisfactory and often good. Trainees make good progress in relation to their knowledge and experience at the start of the course.

8. Trainees are confident, hard-working and enthusiastic. They treat their students and colleagues with respect and they behave in a professional manner. They are keen to improve their teaching and to develop professionally. Around twenty trainees are undertaking specialist Skills for Life qualifications at the same time as completing their Cert Ed/PGCE.

9. Those who teach literacy, numeracy or ESOL develop appropriate subject knowledge throughout the programme. Trainees with other specialisms demonstrate good subject knowledge early on in the course and use this well when planning and teaching. In many cases, this is supported by wider reading. Those trainees with vocational specialisms have appropriate work experience and use this to good effect in their teaching.

10. Advice and guidance from tutors and mentors is taken seriously by trainees and they respond positively. Many trainees demonstrate good skills of critical evaluation and reflective practice. However, in some cases, trainees' evaluations are superficial and do not place sufficient emphasis on students' learning.

11. Trainees plan their lessons well. They identify clear aims and objectives and they are particularly adept at planning a variety of activities. In doing so, most trainees take into account the differing abilities and prior learning of their students and they recognise the importance of paying attention to

individuals' needs. They have a clear understanding about what differentiation means in practice.

12. Trainees confidently and effectively use a wide range of teaching and learning methods and are keen to experiment with the use of games, quizzes and interactive computer-based activities. In many cases, trainees design and produce high quality resources to support their teaching.

13. Both pre-service and in-service trainees have a good understanding of issues relating to equality of opportunity, inclusion and diversity and this is reflected in their planning and teaching. Those on the pre-service course demonstrate particularly good knowledge and skills in relation to working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

14. In the majority of lessons taught by trainees, students are well behaved. Trainees develop good classroom management skills. They are able to prevent disruption by planning lessons well to accommodate a range of activities and to maintain students' motivation. However, in a few cases, trainees do not challenge students enough and this leads to poor behaviour by some students.

15. The quality of trainees' monitoring and assessment of students' work is generally good. The majority have a good understanding of assessment theory and practice. When given the opportunities, trainees demonstrate competence in marking students' work on a regular basis, using externally set assessment criteria and providing students with appropriate feedback.

16. In lessons, trainees check students' learning frequently using a range of methods. However, a few trainees who rely heavily on question and answer as their main assessment strategy use only superficial questioning. Because of this, they are unable to judge accurately the depth of their students' learning.

17. Committed to helping their students succeed, trainees provide students with high levels of support. However, not all trainees are given sufficient opportunities at their workplace to develop skills in setting their students realistic and challenging targets in relation to their academic work. Trainees are aware of additional support service at their workplace and are familiar with procedures to refer students to specialist support.

## Quality of training

18. The Cert Ed/PGCE programme is well designed. Recently re-validated, it meets Standards Verification UK (formerly FENTO) national qualification requirements. It takes account of developments in post-compulsory training and provides a good balance of theory and practice. There are good progression routes to and from the Cert Ed/PGCE, with a bridging course that

provides direct entry into the second year of the part-time course and a range of under-graduate and post-graduate degrees offered by the university.

19. One particularly strong feature of the programme is a 'block' event at the end of the year, involving all trainees from across the partnership. Working to tight deadlines and often with colleagues they have not met before, trainees produce innovative subject-specific resources, with an accompanying lesson plan. They then display these resources at a fair, where they confidently demonstrate their products to tutors, mentors, colleagues and visitors and discuss the rationale for the resources they have developed. The standard of work is high and trainees clearly benefit from meeting each other, sharing expertise and celebrating their achievements.

20. Trainees demonstrate, through written tasks within the programme, how they have helped to develop the literacy, language, numeracy and ICT skills of their students, regardless of the subject specialism. The partnership has made good progress in beginning to address the 'national minimum core'. It is embedded within the programme and, in addition, trainees explore skills for life issues in a module on educational policies. Although most trainees understand the policy agenda well, in practice, some still struggle with the practicalities of embedding these skills into their teaching and need more support. However, in-service trainees at one of the colleges benefit from particularly good practice. A tutor with expertise in skills for life has provided these trainees with relevant and realistic support that they have been able to apply very effectively to their own context.

21. Trainees on the pre-service course generally benefit from good placements, supportive and well-qualified mentors, and an appropriate range of teaching and assessment opportunities. However, this is not the case for all trainees, particularly for a minority of the in-service trainees. Some are employed in small organisations or departments to teach specific subjects, groups or levels and struggle to find additional teaching to broaden their experience. This is recognised by the programme team and some progress has been made in addressing the issue.

22. Those trainees who choose to undertake a certificate in teaching literacy, numeracy or ESOL in addition to the CertEd/PCGE value the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in these areas and to gain two qualifications. Several students who have completed one of these Skills for Life courses plan to take another one next year.

23. As skilled, experienced and innovative practitioners, most teacher trainers are models of good practice and are very highly regarded by trainees. Trainees describe some of their tutors as 'inspirational'. The standard of teaching on the pre-service course is particularly high. However, this standard is not consistently high across the whole partnership.

24. Teacher trainers know their trainees well and provide them with very good support. Trainees on the part-time course value the fact that tutors provide email support in addition to tutorials. Although there is good informal support, progress reviews do not always pick up on action points from lesson observations, assignment feedback or issues arising from trainees' personal learning plans. As some trainees, particularly from the part-time course, do not take full advantage of the support on offer, they miss out on regular monitoring of their progress.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

25. This strong partnership is successfully led and managed by the university, with very effective involvement of partnership members and cohesive team working. Colleagues from partner colleges are actively involved in development days as well as validation and moderation events.

26. Roles and responsibilities of tutors and managers involved in the planning, delivery and assessment of the programme are clearly understood and are outlined in the memorandum of agreement signed by all partners. Procedures used to evaluate the overall quality of the provision across the partnership are extensive and, in the most part, effective.

27. There is a clear and established ethos of continual improvement across the partnership. Teams are responsive to feedback from within the partnership as well as from external examiners and inspectors. Staff are proactive in their quest to improve provision and resolve current or potential problems. To improve the quality of subject-specific support, for example, mentors complete a slightly different form to the one used by teacher trainers when they observe lessons. The mentors' form requires the observer to focus on subject-specific knowledge and skills demonstrated by the trainee during the lesson. Other examples of improvements to the programme include agreed plans to formally monitor the range of teaching opportunities for each trainee, actions to ensure sufficient challenge for high achieving trainees, further development of the virtual learning environment and an extension of a paired moderation system for observations to cover the whole partnership in 2006-07.

28. The network of partnership mentors is expanding and staff are working hard and effectively to continue to improve the quality of mentoring. For example, they have organised a second annual mentoring conference as well as a number of different training events for mentors at a range of venues. To date, the number of mentors at some of the training events has been disappointingly low but those who have attended mentor training sessions are very positive about the impact on them and on their trainees. Those who do not attend are provided with written guidance.



29. The marking and moderation of trainees' written work is rigorous. The process includes a pairing system, whereby tutors across the partnership moderate the work of another college or the university's full-time provision. To encourage consistency and to share good practice, issues arising from moderation are discussed by college partners and university tutors at development days.

30. The admissions process for the Cert Ed/PGCE is effective. As with primary and secondary programmes offered by the university, trainees' literacy skills are assessed when they apply for the programme and they are screened for a minimum GCSE grade C or equivalent in mathematics and English. On the pre-service course, trainees usually meet this threshold on entry. Those who do not are required to register for relevant level 2 courses. The extent to which the progress of these trainees is monitored is variable across the partnership.

31. In many of the partnership colleges, effective links between those staff involved in human resources, teacher training and staff development, benefit those trainees employed by the college. These trainees further develop their teaching skills by attending staff development events and participating in college-wide observation programmes.

## Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the HEI Partnership at the time of the inspection;

- City of Sunderland College
- Darlington College of Technology
- Derwentside College
- East Durham and Houghall Community College
- Gateshead College
- Hartlepool College of FE
- Newcastle College
- North Tyneside College
- Northumberland College
- South Tyneside College
- Stockton and Billingham College of FE
- Tameside College
- Walford and North Shropshire College