

Secondary Initial Teacher Training
based on

The Grand Union Training Partnership

Sponne School
Brackley Road
Towcester
Northants
NN12 6DJ

A full inspection report
2005/06

Managing Inspector:
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Introduction

The Grand Union Training Partnership is a consortium of seven schools providing secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses for the 11-18 age range and for the 14-19 age range in business studies. The consortium offers training in business studies, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. The course also leads to a PGCE validated by the University of Leicestershire. At the time of the inspection there were 21 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 3

Management and quality assurance: Grade 3

The provider will receive a full inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- rigorous and effective selection procedures
- the trainees' commitment to their training and to their professional development
- trainees' approach to, and enthusiasm for, teaching
- well designed assignments and development tasks.

Points for action

- developing the subject leadership role of all lead mentors to enable them to carry out their moderation and quality assurance role effectively
- ensuring all mentors make effective links between the content of central subject training and school based training
- adopting a more consistent and rigorous approach to moderation by trainers across and within subjects to ensure accurate assessments of trainees' progress.

Points for consideration

- improving trainees' evaluations of their teaching so that they focus more effectively on pupils' learning
- producing an annual improvement plan for all subjects and sharing it with all involved in subject training
- developing the web site to improve access to up to date resources, share materials, improve communication and disseminate good practice.

Standards achieved by trainees

1. The trainees are highly self-motivated and show good professional commitment to their training. They have high expectations of the pupils they teach with regard to their behaviour and learning, and treat staff and pupils consistently and respectfully. They involve themselves fully in school departments, and make a positive contribution, for example by running a weekly 'after hours' revision clinic for Year 11 pupils studying business education and organising theatre trips in English. Most involve themselves in the wider life of the school although there is scope for greater involvement in extra curricular activities. Trainees communicate sensitively and effectively with parents using their good knowledge of individual pupils to provide detailed reports.
2. All trainees are proactive in furthering their own professional development and make full use of the opportunities provided in their placement schools by interviewing specialist staff, observing good practice outside their subject area, taking part in in-service training or attending workshops in their schools to develop subject knowledge. They are very keen to receive feedback on their progress and are determined to improve. Although trainees evaluate their lessons regularly and often very thoroughly against a suitable framework, the main focus of their comments is on their teaching performance rather than the quality of pupils' learning.
3. Most trainees build on the knowledge and experience gained at degree level and work hard to develop areas in which they feel less confident. They have a secure understanding of the programmes of study, assessment arrangements and examination courses in their subject across the full age range. However, their awareness of curriculum developments and subject specific issues is not fully developed in English. Trainees have acquired a useful knowledge of the pastoral curriculum through teaching personal, social and health education as part of their role as form tutors. The majority of trainees have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use these well to support their teaching.
4. All trainees have a good understanding of the National Curriculum guidance and statutory requirements. They pay good attention to health and safety issues, make appropriate risk assessments and take suitable actions to deal with incidents that arise in lessons. Most have a satisfactory and some a very good understanding of transition issues between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. They show good knowledge of 14-19 progression routes and post-16 courses.
5. Trainees plan lessons and sequences of lessons that enable pupils to find the work interesting and stimulating. Lesson plans clearly identify the expectations and set out the objectives for the lesson and the majority of trainees demonstrate a good understanding of the relationship between these. They plan a range of teaching and learning approaches relevant to the class and to the topic being taught. Although all

trainees include appropriate strategies for differentiating their teaching, assessment strategies are not always matched explicitly to the intended learning outcomes.

6. The trainees are enthusiastic teachers and have a good rapport with their pupils. Lessons are managed well with trainees demonstrating good class and behaviour management skills and able to establish a purposeful learning environment. Lessons are generally structured well with a good pace and range of teaching approaches and strategies.

7. The trainees mark pupils' work regularly and use strategies to monitor pupils' progress. The large majority record outcomes systematically and provide constructive feedback that helps pupils to make progress. However, many do not always use assessment information effectively to inform future planning and teaching.

The quality of training

8. The course structure and content meet the Requirements of *Qualifying to Teach*, and enable trainees to demonstrate that they meet the Standards. Trainees have good opportunities to teach and assess pupils across the full age and ability range. A significant improvement since the last inspection is that subject training now includes two full days before each main teaching placement, covering key areas such as planning, assessment and differentiation. The structure also allows general professional studies (GPS) sessions to be followed up during subject training sessions, and where this happens trainees and trainers are able to make effective links between different elements of the course

9. The content of the subject training programmes provides broad coverage of key aspects of each subject. The GPS programme is cross-referenced to the Standards and covers key areas.

10. The content of all the elements of the training is cross-referenced to the Standards and trainees are required to reflect this in their training records and Standards log. Mapping against the Standards has revealed a need to include more training in teaching pupils who have English as an additional language, and this has been built effectively into the programme for this year. Subject mentors contribute to the planning and delivery of subject twilight sessions as well as subject training days. However, there is insufficient planning for follow-up of GPS themes or exploration of the content of GPS sessions during subject training. In business education mentors are well informed about the content of central subject training as materials and resources are placed on the web site.

11. Central subject training days are well planned and delivered, and help trainees make progress in their planning and teaching. In science and mathematics, trainees attend useful training in subject application at Leicester University. The quality of mentoring in schools is variable: some is very good because it

complements well central training, is sharply focussed on applying theory to teaching and ensures that trainees develop and evaluate a good range of teaching styles, for example in history and in business education. However, other school-based training does not always build effectively on the central training programme and lacks sufficient challenge and rigour. During this year changes have been introduced to improve the recording of aspects of training used by trainees in their planning and evaluation of lessons. However, training does not always focus sufficiently on showing trainees how to assess the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning.

12. The quality of recorded information about trainees' individual needs varies across subjects. Trainers take account of the individual strengths of trainees and identify areas for development, although this information is not used systematically to frame individual training programmes.

13. The auditing of trainees' ICT competence is sound and trainees develop good ICT skills. The subject knowledge audits are not used systematically to set targets and probe the accuracy of the trainees' self-assessments. They are not reviewed effectively to ensure that training addresses gaps in trainees' subject knowledge and understanding. In some instances trainers are not sufficiently rigorous in assessing progress of more able trainees and setting challenging targets for improvement.

14. Trainees monitor their own progress and record this in the standards log, which is checked by mentors. This is used at periodic reviews of performance, completed by trainees and mentors, and signed off by a member of the management group. Trainees receive a lot of informal and formal feedback on their teaching but the quality varies. The best is very specific and constructive but some is too general and over-generous. Assignments and development tasks support the training effectively. For example, they encourage trainees to reflect on their subject in relation to specific issues, such as transition from Key Stage 2, national strategies or the performance of boys and girls.

15. Systems for reviewing trainees' performance are followed and the quality of reviews has improved this year. However they are inconsistent. Some are good, others are not because they are not sufficiently subject-specific, or the review does not adequately reflect available evidence. For the most able trainees targets are not always sufficiently exacting to allow them to progress as much as they might.

Management and quality assurance

16. The provider's selection procedures are well designed and effective. Prospective trainees are given clear and accurate information about the training programmes: through the information pack, comprehensive handbooks, discussions with partnership administrators and trainers by phone and during selection, and also through the newly available web site. There is full involvement of school-based trainers in all aspects of selection and clear criteria are applied at interview. The rigorous application of these thorough procedures results in the recruitment of well-qualified trainees. Suitable development activities are provided with reading lists of relevant and up to date generic and subject-specific texts to help trainees to prepare for the training.

17. The partnership's race equality and equal opportunity policies are clear and comprehensive and are applied effectively during selection. Trainees feel that they are valued as individuals from their first contact with the partnership. Applicants from under-represented groups are welcomed and supported. The provider makes a good and successful effort to recruit trainees from minority ethnic groups by, for example, carefully targeted advertising in local and national newspapers, and publications for graduates as well as initiatives such as open evenings to encourage and support applications from local people. The provider currently exceeds the Training and Development Agency target for minority ethnic recruitment.

18. The management of the partnership at programme level is satisfactory. Investment since the last report in developing key roles and responsibilities has strengthened strategic leadership. The management committee has a good understanding of all aspects of the programme and when problems occur appropriate action is taken. School based training in most subject areas is managed effectively by mentors who are skilled practitioners. They use their expertise well to enable the trainees to make good progress towards achieving the standards despite minimal guidance from lead mentors. The leadership and management role of lead mentors is not fully developed in all subjects, especially where they are new to the post. Guidance has focused predominantly on management and organisation of subject training rather than on subject leadership. Some lead mentors have attended relatively little recent training in their subject and do not always have sufficient knowledge of national developments, for example in English and mathematics.

19. The new partnership agreement is clear, effective, and meets the requirements. The schools are suitable venues for training and are fully committed to the partnership. Roles and responsibilities are generally clear and appropriate although they are not applied consistently in all schools. Communication between managers, trainers and trainees works well on an informal basis between individuals and has a positive impact on the day to day management of the training. However, not all partners have a shared understanding of partnership wide procedures which can lead to some variation in implementation for example in reviewing and setting targets for developing subject knowledge. Resources are deployed well although a

small minority of trainees have limited opportunities to use ICT in their teaching. The web site is being developed as a means of increasing trainees' access to up to date subject journals and teaching materials. The provider is responsive to requests to improve ICT facilities in schools. The installation of interactive whiteboards and the provision of laptops have benefited trainees and partnership schools.

20. Since the last inspection the management group has taken a more significant role in assuring the quality of the training and has extended monitoring procedures. The director and deputy directors monitor training at programme level to ensure that training enables Standards to be met in all subjects and that all trainees receive their entitlement. However, the quality assurance role of the lead mentors in school based training is not fully developed. There is some overlap between the roles of directors and lead mentors, which requires some clarification. Inexperienced lead mentors do not have enough time or guidance to drive improvement. The provider is aware of the need to develop the quality assurance role of lead mentors and recent initiatives are positive, particularly the transition meeting of lead mentors and trainees during main placement and the requirement for joint observation.

21. Procedures for moderation of the final assessment of trainees against the Standards are accurate and the pass/fail borderline is secure. The procedures for internal moderation are appropriate but are implemented inconsistently within and across subjects. Assessments are over generous; trainers are not sufficiently rigorous in assessing the progress of more able trainees and setting challenging targets for improvement.

22. The director has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and uses a range of internal and external data to monitor quality and set improvement targets. Training programmes are evaluated against clear criteria in the quality assurance audit and progress is reviewed against targets and reported annually. The annual report tracks useful indicators such as recruitment, qualifications, completion and employment rates year on year to make comparisons between local and national data. Improvement planning is developed at programme level in considerable detail but there is limited subject-related planning. For example, there are no subject reports to ensure that all involved are fully aware of the key points for development, such as planning to follow up GPS themes in subject training.