

Billericay Educational Consortium

Oakfield Primary School
Scott Drive
Wickford
SS12 9PW

A primary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The Billericay Educational Consortium works in partnership with eight schools to provide a one-year primary initial teacher training (ITT) course, leading to the award of a postgraduate certificate in education. 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 revised report combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and of the management and quality assurance arrangements in 2006/7, 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 quality of training in English and mathematics
- the weekly group tutorials in school
- the focus on developing trainees' subject knowledge and understanding
- the recruitment and retention of very well qualified trainees
- the trainees' development as reflective practitioners
- the excellent communication between management and schools
- the strong senior management team who carry out their roles and responsibilities very efficiently and effectively
- the commitment, involvement and support from the staff of all partnership schools
- the high quality mentor training programme.

The quality of training

1. The quality of the training is outstanding. A wealth of data on trainees' performance against the Standards over the last three years shows a clear and significant improvement and this is related directly to the excellent training provided in schools and at the central training base.

2. The structure and content of the course are very well planned to meet the Requirements at a good level. Trainees are very well prepared to teach in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and there is secure coverage of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 3. Taught sessions, tasks and assignments are all referenced to the Standards. Practical sessions in school are sensibly planned to follow on from centre-based sessions in order to ensure that trainees are able to practise new skills without delay. However, there is an imbalance of school-based tasks in the core subjects; for example, there are a large number of English tasks, which pose significant workload demands on trainees, but fewer in other core subjects. There are very well developed links between professional studies and discrete subject areas. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) sensibly incorporates work across the curriculum. Using ICT as a tool for learning is very well integrated into the teaching of different subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.

3. Tutors know the trainees very well. Their assessments are used very effectively to ensure that centre-based and school-based training is planned to meet the trainees' individual needs. The trainees' skills and subject knowledge are audited and tracked assiduously from recruitment through to completion of the training. The partnership has introduced very effective systems to monitor trainees' progress. Trainees make a good start by undertaking focused pre-course tasks as part of their individual learning plans. All tasks and assessments are marked very well. Trainees are observed teaching regularly and receive good quality feedback. The very best feedback is outstanding; it is highly subject-specific and links pedagogical skills with subject knowledge. Very good support is provided by school-based mentors and course tutors. Trainees are encouraged to be reflective practitioners from the outset of their training. Their development as reflective teachers, especially in English, is a strength of the course. They maintain detailed learning logs which contribute to their development as reflective teachers.

4. Tutors have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject areas. Training sessions are very well planned with clear learning outcomes and provide a high level intellectual challenge for trainees. Tutors model effective primary practice well. Trainees are particularly inspired by the training in mathematics and English. The partnership has ensured that trainees have good access to essential resources in the central training base.

5. Centre-based training is complemented with a highly structured programme of school-based training. The weekly group tutorials in schools, with their carefully prescribed programme, are a strong feature. The trainees' lesson planning is good. Their lesson plans indicate that the training is highly successful at developing the

trainees' subject knowledge and their understanding of how to plan a progressive programme of learning in individual subjects.

6. The assessment of trainees' written work and practical teaching is rigorous. Trainees receive helpful, subject-specific comments to enable them to improve. Teaching is assessed carefully against groups of the Standards.

Management and quality assurance

7. The partnership is successful in recruiting very well-qualified candidates. The retention rate is high; all trainees completed the course last year. The partnership is successful in recruiting males into primary teaching but is not so successful in recruiting trainees from minority ethnic groups. The web site provides helpful and detailed information for prospective candidates. The recruitment process is rigorous and fully involves head teachers and mentors from all the partnership schools. The interview tasks are well planned and include observation of candidates working with pupils in school. Effective use is made of the outcomes of the tasks to inform trainees' individual development plans.

8. The programme co-ordinator, course tutor, moderating tutor and lead head teacher form a strong team. They are ably supported by an administration officer who manages the office very efficiently. Communication between schools and the management team is excellent. The weekly newsletter is very informative. The secure web site is a very useful resource where all information relating to the training is posted.

9. The committee and management structure is based upon a sound rationale. Lines of accountability are very well defined and well understood. Careful and accurate minutes of all meetings are maintained. They reflect the in-depth discussions held on quality issues and on course review and development. Partnership school staff are consulted regularly and participate in working parties to discuss course developments. All trainers are made aware that they are accountable for the quality of the training that they plan and deliver. Their annual reports to the governing body are well written and evaluative.

10. The head teachers and staff of the eight schools are highly committed to the training programme and meet regularly. This is a key strength. Trainees are placed in good schools which are selected carefully on the basis of their Ofsted reports and the availability of high quality mentors. When schools express an interest in joining the partnership, their strengths are audited carefully before they are accepted.

11. The partnership recruits well qualified tutors to deliver the centre-based training element and there is a high level of stability in the retention of tutors. Links with the local authority are also well established and advisory teachers contribute to the delivery of the training. The management team has a very good knowledge of the expertise of staff in partnership schools and is making good use of staff to plan and deliver training. For example, the lead head teacher delivers sessions on special

educational needs and inclusion. All partners have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, the training programme is co-ordinated very effectively and links between centre-based training and school-based training are very well developed. The trainees have access to a plentiful supply of teaching and learning resources in their placement schools.

12. Arrangements for mentor training are excellent. Mentors have access to a well planned and differentiated training programme. They are assessed regularly against clear criteria and assigned to a category which determines the shape of their training. This is an exemplary feature. Arrangements for training new mentors are particularly good. Their skills are audited at the outset and the training is tailored subsequently to meet their individual needs. Training in lesson observation and giving feedback assumes a high profile in all mentor training programmes. The course tutor and moderating tutor also conduct regular joint observations with mentors of trainees' teaching and these serve as another useful training opportunity.

13. Internal and external moderation arrangements are excellent. The course moderator and course tutor undertake frequent school visits to moderate mentors' assessment of trainees. They give very full written feedback to mentors on the completion of lesson observation forms and the quality of mentor assessment against the Standards. All assignments are second marked and moderated subsequently by a head teacher or senior course staff in order to ensure consistency of assessment. The external examiners' reports are detailed and helpful. They confirm the high quality training and particularly the excellent use made of reflective journals. The partnership responds promptly and fully to external examiners' reports.

14. The last inspection highlighted the need to monitor the policies on equality of opportunity and race relations. This issue has been successfully addressed and ongoing action plans are drawn up to monitor provision. Similarly, all the other points for consideration from the last inspection have been resolved successfully.

15. The partnership undertakes an extensive evaluation of all elements of the training programme. Every head teacher and member of the governing body observes training sessions. Trainees and mentors also play a full role in evaluating provision. Self evaluation is very thorough and plays an important part in the culture of the partnership. Where issues about quality are raised, they are investigated thoroughly and acted upon.

16. The partnership is continually striving to improve its provision and is extremely successful in doing so. The management team has an excellent knowledge and understanding of its strengths and areas for development. There are extensive improvement plans which draw upon the full range of evidence. For example, mentor development plans are very well focused upon improving the skills of mentors and clarifying procedures for monitoring the completion of school-based tasks. Links between self evaluation and improvement planning are very strong.