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University of Sunderland

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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Sunderland works in partnership with 233 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a four-year BA Honours in primary education (5-11), a one-year postgraduate course in primary education and also a one-year postgraduate course in primary education with a specialism in French. At the time of the inspection there were 150 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 short 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

Management and quality assurance: Grade 2

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the strong, effective partnership with schools
- the coherence of the programmes, particularly the strong links between theory and practice
- the good quality of the centre-based training
- the development of new initiatives
- the management systems and administration.

Points for consideration

- strengthening the quality of subject-specific feedback to trainees
- ensuring that all monitoring systems are implemented fully and evidence is used to enhance the trainees' performance
- strengthening action planning by making clear the expected outcomes for trainees' performance
- making more explicit the links between the content of all modules, sessions and assignments to the Standards.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training in the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is good with some outstanding features. Trainees are prepared well to meet the Standards and, for the trainees who take the postgraduate French enhanced programme, to teach French to children in primary schools.
2. The content and structure of the programmes are good and meet the Requirements. The modules for professional studies, English, mathematics and science, information and communication technology (ICT) and other foundation subjects are progressive and coherent. They span the full academic year, programmed around placements, allowing trainees to put theory into practice, to reflect on their experiences, to set targets for future development and then to re-visit theory. The modules are effective in extending the trainees' knowledge and understanding of the 5-11 curriculum and how children learn. Very good account is taken of the National Curriculum, the Primary National Strategy and initiatives including Excellence and Enjoyment and Every Child Matters. Astute changes have kept the programmes abreast of current educational trends.
3. Modules in the core and foundation subjects are underpinned by the content of professional studies. Trainees have good opportunities to focus on the key aspects of subjects including teaching, planning, assessment, inclusion and diversity. There is a good emphasis on the development of subject skills, with a focus on practical science and problem solving in mathematics as well as a good grounding in the teaching of reading and writing. Centre and school-based training combine very well to secure trainees' progress towards the Standards and to allow trainees to contextualise and apply the content of modules. Both programmes give due attention to the Foundation Stage. A particular strength of the undergraduate programme is the opportunity for trainees to take specialist Early Years' modules and to undertake a placement in the Foundation Stage. There is reference to transition to Key Stage 3 and postgraduate trainees benefit from a visit to a Key Stage 3 setting. Challenging undergraduate optional modules enrich trainees' knowledge and understanding; good examples include those in special educational needs, current research, and initiatives in the teaching of English.
4. There is a strong, enthusiastic team of tutors. The developing culture of research and shared practice benefits tutors and trainees alike. Training sessions are well planned to link theory and practice. Trainers model a wide variety of strategies for teaching and learning, including the effective use of ICT, facilitated by excellent resources and accommodation. Clear reference is made to the Standards in the handbooks, in training sessions and criteria for assignments in professional studies. This is not the case in other modules, which limits the very good potential for trainees to link evidence from their centre-based training to their progress in meeting the Standards.
5. The training provided by the centre and partnership schools is mutually supportive. Centre-based modules are linked to and complemented by a wide range

of school-based tasks, as well as periods of teaching which make increasingly challenging demands on trainees. They find the tasks interesting and worthwhile as they prepare them well, both for teaching and assignment work. Many tasks pose searching questions and test trainees' skills in evaluation but mentors and tutors occasionally miss opportunities to commend, correct and probe trainees' thinking and application.

6. Effective procedures ensure that centre and school-based training takes account of individual needs. The support for trainees with difficulties, such as dyslexia or hearing loss, is very good. Trainees are expected to take the major role in monitoring their own progress and to discuss issues with their studies adviser, other tutors and school mentors. Both trainees and trainers use subject knowledge audits well to identify strengths and areas for development. The findings are used astutely to plan lectures, workshops and tutorials to support trainees and develop their confidence in taking the skills tests as early as possible.

7. School-based mentors know exactly what they and the trainees are to do because of very good quality handbooks which give a detailed, structured overview. In addition, the booklets of school-based tasks, and the records of progress against the Standards, provide clear guidance and good support, especially in identifying relevant evidence. Trainees gain much from their experiences in schools and often benefit from excellent tutoring and support. Mentors take their responsibilities seriously and give considerable time to ensuring that trainees can carry out the school-based tasks prior to their assigned weeks of class teaching.

8. The assessment of trainees against the Standards is systematic and accurate. Trainees' progress is checked by mentors, moderated by the link tutors and tracked by the studies advisers. Trainees are provided with helpful week-by-week checklists to identify how they meet the Standards during school placements. These build into a comprehensive record of professional development which forms the basis for the career entry development profile. The feedback on the quality of trainees' teaching from class teachers, mentors and link tutors varies in quality, focus and frequency. High quality, subject-specific feedback and sharp targets for some trainees contrast with comments and targets for others that are too general. The feedback on assignments is generally well structured, often with strong pointers for improvement. However, some trainees are given little indication of how to achieve higher marks or how their work provides evidence of them meeting the Standards.

Management and quality assurance

9. A strong commitment to improvement is reflected in the effective steps taken to enhance the provision since the previous inspection. The focus on professional development for tutors in the use of ICT has significantly added to the quality of the training in all modules, and of the trainees' skills in teaching ICT. Similarly, the work on the postgraduate programmes, to pilot changes in selection

and partnership procedures, has paved the way for a smooth introduction into the undergraduate programme this year.

10. Recruitment and selection procedures are effective. Information on the web site and in the printed prospectus is clear and comprehensive. The inclusion of comments on the experiences of a former trainee with dyslexia sets a very positive tone. The courses are popular; the university has exceeded its target entry number to the undergraduate course and trainees are well qualified. The proportion of male trainees has increased to one third on the postgraduate programme. Efforts to recruit trainees from minority ethnic groups, especially in the local area, have proved less successful and the university has not met its targets. Given that the vast majority of trainees are from the north east of England, the link established with providers and local authorities in London offers opportunities to widen recruitment and first teaching appointments. The retention rate is high. Candidates are given a good overview of the course before being interviewed. All are asked questions about diversity and inclusion and tested on their skills in written English. The test in mathematics has proved effective on the postgraduate course in identifying weaknesses in mathematical knowledge and giving trainees an opportunity to remedy them before starting the course. The university is prompt to initiate the necessary child protection clearance checks for trainees and rigorous in tracking the outcomes.

11. The strong partnership with more than 200 schools is very well managed and administrated. In the last few years, a small number of schools have been de-selected. Two specialist language colleges support the training of postgraduate trainees in teaching French to children in primary schools. The schools' commitment to training the next generation of teachers leads to a high number of placements throughout the year. Host class teachers, mentors and headteachers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Link tutors from the university know their schools well and, as many work across the programmes, are able to help mentors develop the links between taught modules and school practice.

12. The university makes good use of a tutor from an accredited training school to support new mentors. Schools are sent regular updates on changes to the courses and the expectations of trainees on placements, and mentors are invited to the university to discuss guidance and procedures. The content of these sessions is often of high quality; a good example was the guidance on how to give feedback to trainees on lessons in mathematics. Class teachers are required to attend a meeting before a placement and the recent decision to extend this by drawing together link tutors, mentors, class teachers and trainees is a good development which has been well received by trainees and schools alike.

13. The appointment of several well qualified, experienced tutors and visiting lecturers has strengthened the training team. It has also created a strong learning community as individuals have brought personal research interests, enthusiasms and school experience which are being used extremely well to complement course content. Current professional development sessions for tutors on diversity and

inclusion are in keeping with national and local concerns and marry well with many aspects of the courses.

14. Critical consultation and quick decision-making are well established and integral to the training at the university. Module leaders are highly responsive to evaluations by trainees, tutors and external examiners. Their comments, along with the outcomes of frequent, rigorous reviews at team, committee and board level, result in effective improvements in module content and organisation. However, action plans do not always identify how changes will enhance the trainees' academic and teaching competence, especially in different subjects. Success criteria are not specific enough. There are very few references, in the plans, to school-based training or to the partnership.

15. Although there are many good systems to monitor and moderate the trainees' progress in meeting the Standards, not enough has been done to ensure that quality is assured through their consistent use. External examiners have indicated gaps in procedures including the need to use the upper end of the marking schedule. A good step to establish greater consistency is the acquisition of designated hours for studies advisers this year which raises the profile of their work, particularly in ensuring that trainees fulfil the requirements of modules and set personal targets.

16. Trainers have a good overview of the factors that account for the high satisfaction of trainees. The self-evaluations of training and management and quality assurance are detailed and thorough in outlining the provision and aspects of the impact of the training.