

# Middlesex University

---

Trent Park  
Bramley Road  
London  
N14 4YZ

A secondary initial teacher training  
inspection report

2007/08

© Crown copyright 2008. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date are stated.  
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## Introduction

Middlesex University works in partnership with 123 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) PGCE courses. It offers training in art and design, drama, English, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages in 11-18 age range, design and technology, geography, maths, music, citizenship, physical education, science in the 11-16 age range and business education in the 14-19 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 263 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 2006/07, 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**

- very effective recruitment and selection procedures
- the coherence of all elements of the training programme, supported by high quality documentation
- effective procedures to develop trainees' subject knowledge throughout the course
- strong leadership and management with a clear vision for development
- the dedication and commitment of subject leaders providing a high level of individual support for trainees
- very thorough monitoring and review procedures leading to effective improvement planning.

## The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The course is designed very well to ensure that trainees meet the Standards. The structure of the course offers a very good balance between centre-based and school-based training, with serial school visits followed by block experiences which gradually introduce trainees to independent teaching. In particular, the extended first school experience gives trainees a firm foundation at the start of the course and responds well to issues raised at the time of the last inspection. There has been a significant improvement in provision for physical education, and trainees now have access to the full range of required experiences in the course of their training.

2. The coherence of the programme is a significant strength. Trainees rapidly develop a very good understanding of how the elements of the course combine. The general professional studies (GPS) programme links very well with other elements of the course, including weekly school-based sessions with coordinating mentors. One trainee reflected the views of his colleagues by describing the course as “seamless”, in terms of the integration of central and school-based training. Trainees produce impressive reflective logs, which demonstrate the connections they make between different aspects of the course.

3. Central subject training is of high quality and provides trainees with good teaching activities and techniques that can be easily transferred to the classroom. Trainers model good practice, prompting trainees to evaluate and reflect. All courses are enhanced by the use of external expert speakers and by visits. For example, trainees in modern foreign languages visit the national resource centre. All aspects of central training are linked to the Standards and trainees understand very well what they are to achieve at the early stages of the course.

4. Course content, both in subjects and in the professional programme, is appropriate, comprehensive, up-to-date and very well sequenced. For example, *Every Child Matters* and citizenship issues raised in the GPS programme are followed up very effectively in subject training sessions. There is a strong focus on pupils’ learning from the outset. There is a new lesson-planning format with an agreed framework, and appropriate and effective customising by subjects, especially in physical education and modern languages.

5. Subject knowledge development is particularly good, with focused training from interview onwards. Subject knowledge audits are revisited and updated regularly and frequently; for example, this occurs seven times over the course in music. The quality of subject knowledge audits in geography, English and science exemplify good practice and the record of experience is particularly useful in citizenship. There is an outstanding subject enhancement programme in design and technology, and the work in mathematics is supplemented by a very supportive mathematics subject knowledge workbook which highlights common errors and misunderstandings. Assignments support individual trainees very well; for example the first GPS assignment enables them to research weaker areas of their subject knowledge.

6. The dedicated team of subject leaders provide high quality support for individual trainees. Subject leaders know their school departments well and placements show a close match to trainees' needs. Experiences across the two placement schools are carefully chosen to ensure that they are complementary and where possible the second placement school is chosen to take account of the specific needs of the trainee. Very good documentation is provided by some schools as early as possible to help induct trainees.

7. In school-based training, the great majority of trainees report regular and focused support from their mentors. This process is supported by very clear guidance for mentors on how to apply the weekly topic to their mentor sessions. In the few cases where mentoring is less effective than the best, the provider intervenes swiftly to remedy the situation.

8. Resources are generally of a high standard. There are interactive whiteboards and other audio-visual equipment in many teaching rooms, and a virtual learning environment for tutors and trainees is used extensively to gain access to resources and to share materials and ideas. It is particularly well used in physical education, drama and ICT. Shared use of ICT by trainees and tutors drives trainees' thinking forward, for example trainees can access and respond to online marking of assignments and rapid, targeted feedback on their first subject assignment in drama, English, and business education. The use of ICT to monitor school-based training and track trainees' progress in drama is exemplary.

9. Feedback to trainees on their progress from the range of trainers supporting them is full, detailed and regular. They are challenged very effectively and many trainees develop good skills of evaluation and reflection at an early stage of the course. Target setting is effective. Drama provides a particularly good example of how school-based target setting is monitored. Trainees email their subject leader immediately with outcomes of their weekly mentor meetings. Procedures for the assessment of trainees are clear at all stages of the course, including cases where there is cause for concern.

## **Management and quality assurance**

10. Recruitment procedures are excellent. The partnership is committed to preparing trainees to teach in multilingual, multicultural and multi-faith settings in London schools and recruits trainees from a wide range of backgrounds. The target for minority ethnic recruitment is exceeded with twice the number being recruited. There is also successful recruitment in shortage subjects, with design and technology recruiting to target and mathematics, science and ICT near to target. Retention rates are good and a high proportion of trainees gain employment in partnership or other local schools.

11. Selection procedures are very thorough. Selection criteria are appropriate and standardised across subjects. Interviews are challenging and probe candidates' knowledge and understanding of teaching very effectively. Trainees are put at their

ease and made to feel welcome. Good quality prompt sheets are provided for interviewers. Where possible, school trainers are involved in the interview process and some interviews take place in partnership schools. There is variability in extent of school involvement due to the high number of late applicants in some subjects. For example, a high proportion of mathematics applications come in August. Pre-course selection tasks are matched well to the requirements of the subject and to trainees' individual needs. They are followed up effectively during induction. There is a very high level of pre-course contact between subject leaders and individual trainees, and contact between trainees is encouraged where possible. This is particularly effective in art and design, helping to create a group identity which is built upon during induction workshops.

12. The management of the secondary provision is very effective and supports good quality training and outcomes. There is strong leadership at programme level from the curriculum leader who has a clear vision for the development of the course. The overarching aim of 'one programme with 13 strands' is understood well and supported by a team of very dedicated subject leaders who provide a very high level of individual support for trainees. A very thorough review of provision has resulted in significant improvements in procedures in a relatively short time.

13. The introduction of two new subjects, music and science, and the considerable improvement in physical education since the last inspection have been managed very well to achieve good quality training. The induction of new subject leaders in five subject areas since the last inspection has been very thorough. This includes careful preparation for the marking and moderation of assignments, peer observation of good practice, observation of teaching by the curriculum leader and mentor and joint observations of school-based training. Systematic visits to all partner schools at least once in each school experience provide good opportunities for the new subject leaders to develop the partnership. All subject leaders are paired to deliver training and share practice with careful matching of knowledge, skills and experience, and all attend GPS sessions to monitor and review content and delivery. The inclusion of an agenda item to disseminate good practice during each meeting of the secondary group is a positive feature. However, although it enables a voluntary exchange of good ideas it is not used systematically to discuss areas of identified need.

14. There is a comprehensive partnership agreement that supports good quality training. High quality documentation makes clear all roles and responsibilities, expectations, and trainee entitlements. These are understood thoroughly by the very large majority of trainers and trainees and are applied well. The programme uses a wide range of partner schools and the majority are highly committed to the partnership but finding good quality placements for the large number of trainees is a challenge.

15. Very thorough monitoring of school-based training takes place and course managers respond very quickly and effectively to any concerns raised by trainees or trainers. Subject leaders keep very detailed records and evaluations of placements in order to provide individual support for trainees and subject mentors. This is used

particularly effectively in art and design. School departments are deselected if necessary and are fully informed of the reasons. The use of a shared online calendar system where all subject leaders and link tutors post their school visits in advance enables more efficient communication and monitoring. It ensures that visits to mentors and schools are communicated to all and that outcomes are accessed easily and shared across subject areas. Attendance at mentor training meetings remains low in some subjects although monitoring procedures trigger extra training visits by subject leaders to mentors who do not attend.

16. The role of the coordinating mentor in schools has been strengthened since the last inspection. Attendance at annual conferences is high and they have been fully informed of the outcomes of course reviews. Their views are taken into consideration when changes are made to the course structure and procedures. In all but a small minority of cases communication between the centre-based and school-based trainers is excellent. Trainees evaluate their school experience and the outcomes are shared orally with coordinating mentors. However, there is no formal or systematic procedure for feeding back to subject mentors on the quality of their training or for sharing good practice.

17. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Procedures for reviewing the course and planning improvement are very thorough. The annual monitoring report is completed to a common format at subject and programme levels. It is well designed to draw upon a range of evidence from external and internal monitoring and quality assurance processes. Managers amend the action plans at key points during the year in order to respond to issues and initiatives as they arise. Central training has improved as a result of actions taken.