



University of Reading

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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Reading works in partnership with 37 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses for the 11-18 age range. It offers training in art and design, drama, English, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 192 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 1

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the quality of the management of the programme in securing and sustaining improvements and the capacity for further improvement
- the strength of the partnership
- the continuous review of subject and professional studies programmes to ensure that they are up to date and that the high quality of training is maintained
- the coherence between all elements of the course
- the high quality of guidance and training for mentors
- the attention given to trainees' individual needs
- the rigorous application of selection criteria, and the great care taken to recruit all applicants with the potential to become good teachers.

Points for consideration

- developing more formal procedures for recording and sharing quality assurance information about schools
- adopting a more consistent approach to training in developments in 14-19 and vocational education.

The quality of training

1. The quality of all aspects of the course and subjects that were previously judged to be good or better has been maintained and much has been improved. The two subjects that were previously judged to be satisfactory demonstrate considerable and significant improvement. Extensive and sustained improvements have been made to the physical education course and there is very good capacity for further improvement. A particularly strong feature is the quality of the team of physical education mentors and their involvement in driving and securing the improvements. The provider has put in place a wide range of strategies to strengthen the ICT course and all have had a positive impact leading to significant improvements.
2. School-based ITT co-ordinators and mentors provide many examples of how the secondary provision has improved in recent years; for instance, improvements in the monitoring of trainees' progress and target setting, and in the overall coherence of the course. There is much greater consistency across many aspects of the secondary programme, with sufficient flexibility to enable, for example, methods studies to be matched well to the particular needs of different subjects. The trainees in all subjects are highly enthusiastic about the quality of their training and the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of the trainers.
3. The programme is constantly reviewed and updated; the excellent approach to Every Child Matters in professional and subject method studies is a very good example of this. There is very strong coherence between the different elements of the training and trainees have a clear understanding of how these elements combine to support their progress. Very good use is made of the serial teaching placement to ensure strong links between theory and practice. Whilst there are cases of very good practice, the attention given to developments in 14-19 and vocational education is inconsistent and depends too much on the placement school and individual professional studies tutors.
4. Trainees are fully involved in monitoring their own progress and formal self-evaluation is built in at key points in the course. The provider encourages trainees to reflect on their own progress and develop independence; this is valued highly by schools. Training is matched well to the needs of individual trainees. Pre-course development is focused well on particular needs. Trainees complete an opening position statement and this is used well, together with the information gathered during the selection process, to produce an individual development plan. Trainees maintain a detailed record of their progress, and the assessment review points are well placed throughout the course. Procedures for monitoring progress and setting targets are clear and applied consistently. Trainees, at an early stage in the course, have a clear understanding of the evidence they need to provide against the Standards and that this evidence should come from their planning, teaching and assessment of pupils. The arrangements for the final assessment of trainees are secure.

5. Schools respond very well to the needs of individual trainees and most mentors use the trainee's position statement well to plan training in the early stages of the placement. Good attention is given to individual needs in the allocation of teaching placements; for example, to ensure that modern foreign languages trainees have good experiences of teaching at Key Stage 4 and post-16. The two school placements are complementary and ensure that all trainees gain experience across the full age and ability range. There is good progression from first to second placement with detailed records of trainees' progress passing between schools. The final placement is planned well, encouraging trainees' further professional development as well as providing opportunities for some trainees to meet particular Standards or gain additional experience, for example, of post-16 teaching.

Management and quality assurance

6. Selection procedures are applied rigorously and consistently to ensure the recruitment of high quality trainees in all subjects. There is sufficient flexibility to ensure that the procedures are matched well to the particular requirements of different subjects. The rigorous application has led to a steady improvement in the quality of the trainees recruited over several years. The provider is careful to identify good potential; for example by applying an 'exceptional candidates policy' in English for those applicants with non-standard degrees, the use of deferred applications in mathematics and other subjects, and by offering a two-year course in modern foreign languages. The provider makes extensive and successful efforts to encourage applications from minority ethnic and other underrepresented groups and meets its voluntary recruitment target. All trainee withdrawals are analysed carefully to monitor the effectiveness of the selection procedures.

7. The outstanding management of the secondary programme assures high quality training and leads to the continuous improvement of the course. There is a very strong management group for the secondary programme. The leadership and management of subject and professional studies course are excellent. The quality of this management is demonstrated extremely well by the extensive and sustained improvements in physical education and ICT as well as the increased coherence between subject methods studies and professional studies. The strength of the partnership with schools has been significantly improved and is now outstanding. The management is robust and this is indicated well by the handling of the staffing problems in mathematics without any diminution in the quality of the training. The management also responds very effectively to information arising from monitoring individual trainees' progress, as well as from monitoring the effectiveness of systems and procedures. Good practice is exemplified in the way in which procedures for assessing trainees at the end of the first placement have been modified, the clarity of both mentors' and trainees' understanding of the need for these changes and of the procedures themselves. The way the course is addressing changes in schools, such as Every Child Matters, is impressive. A mentor accreditation scheme is being phased in to assure further improvement; this has been welcomed with great enthusiasm by mentors.

8. The programme steering group has an excellent balance of membership, including ITT co-ordinators and former and current trainees, and is an excellent forum for review and securing further improvement. For example, this group recently undertook a review of the course against the Requirements to provide a different perspective from that arising from the management group's own on-going review.

9. The views of school-based ITT co-ordinators and mentors are welcomed, valued and acted upon; they are fully involved in course review and development. ITT co-ordinators are clear about their management and quality assurance functions and carry these out well. There are some examples of outstanding practice; such as, ITT co-ordinators checking the records of trainees' weekly meetings with mentors to monitor the quality of target setting and holding regular meetings with all mentors in their school to share good practice as well as to ensure consistency in the application of procedures. The provider's subject mentor meetings are exceptionally well attended, are of good quality and highly valued. New mentors and ITT co-ordinators receive additional good support from established mentors through a 'buddy' system. The expertise within partnership schools is recognised and used well, for example in delivering some central training.

10. The internal and external moderation of the assessment of trainees is rigorous, robust and effective. A very good range of standardisation procedures is used to train mentors, such as requiring all mentors in physical education to observe the same lesson and feedback, using 'real time' video of a trainee's teaching, and discussing samples of trainees' portfolios. Extensive use is made of joint observations, providing very good training for mentors as well as moderation. Each subject has an external examiner ensuring the security of assessments at the pass/fail boundary. External examiners also fulfil a useful quality assurance and advisory role.

11. The provider ensures the training is of high quality by giving clear guidance to schools on what they should provide and through the excellent mentor training. All mentors are absolutely clear about what they should do, the quality expected and how school-based training is monitored. Extensive quality assurance is undertaken by the ITT co-ordinator and as part of tutor visits to schools. Each school also receives an annual visit from a member of a quality assurance team of tutors. This is preceded by an analysis of trainees' evaluations of the school. The record of the meeting with the co-ordinator is used to build up a quality assurance profile of the school. This has been instrumental in increasing the strength of the partnership. Currently, mentors do not have a role in this process and it is not clear how other quality assurance information is used in formally reviewing the profile. For example, although any issues arising from a subject tutor visit to a school are dealt with effectively, they do not necessarily become recorded in the profile.

12. Extensive evaluation and benchmarking of all aspects of the programme is undertaken, with detailed analysis to plan further improvement. A strong indication of the drive for continuous improvement is the plan to focus this evaluation much more on particular issues. One very good example is the work currently being

undertaken, initially in mathematics, comparing trainees' selection and final grades and exploring whether this might provide evidence of the value added by the training. Improvement planning, at subject and programme level, is rigorous, thorough and based on the extensive data and information collected from a wide variety of sources. It results in a detailed set of recommendations and actions that are shared across the partnership, monitored and reviewed carefully to inform future planning. There is excellent capacity for further improvement.