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University of Worcester

**Better
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Henwick Grove
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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Worcester works in partnership with 110 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers business education for the 14-19 age range, and design and technology, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science for the 11-18 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 188 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 innovative approach to course development
- the coherence between different elements of the course
- the partnership with schools
- the strategic management of strengths within the university and across the partnership
- the communication between trainees, subject tutors and subject mentors
- the frequency and quality of monitoring the progress of trainees.

Points for consideration

- making more explicit the role of the professional mentor in assuring quality
- analysing the impact of different approaches used in individual subjects.

The quality of training

1. The training programmes are skilfully designed to equip trainees with coherent and relevant experiences. Recent adjustments that spread central subject, professional studies and school based training more evenly over the year are effective in making the various elements of the course contribute to the continuity of training and progression of trainees. The regular pattern of contact and communication between trainees, university tutors and school based mentors is valued by all.

2. The content of the courses covers a breadth of up-to-date topics balanced with good opportunities to pursue depth through different options and assignments. The implications of *Every Child Matters*, for example, are successfully woven into the training at every level so that trainees develop a clear understanding of the issues and how they apply. Careful attention is paid to the relevant National Curriculum requirements, to the Secondary National Strategy, to planning, differentiation, assessment for learning and to examination courses. At the same time, courses have their own specialist focus, which is always relevant and sometimes innovative. The English course, for example, allows trainees to develop specialisms in media, drama and creative writing, making effective use of the trainees' strengths. Physical education provides thorough preparation for the six areas of the subject and encourages trainees to gain a wide variety of coaching qualifications.

3. Trainees gain good experience of the full secondary age range in the schools, including for some, early opportunities to teach post-16 students. The new cluster arrangements are intended to provide more flexible access to a range of school experience and this is a very positive initiative. The special educational needs (SEN), citizenship and 14-19 pathways provide an innovative, specialist focus for those who choose to do them. The most established pathway in SEN is very successful and is evidence of how new initiatives are managed, modified and refined to achieve high quality training.

4. The Standards are integrated very effectively into all elements of the training. Opportunities for trainees to record evidence of consistently meeting the Standards are signalled throughout the course. University tutors, school-based trainers and trainees analyse progress in meeting specific Standards frequently and accurately. This addresses the needs of individuals very effectively.

5. Individual training needs are identified early through the revised selection procedures and this informs the training routes and options taken by different trainees. Targets are based on candidates' subject knowledge, communication skills, personal qualities, self-awareness and understanding about professional values. Trainees are required to attend booster courses if necessary and some courses expect trainees to complete extensive tasks in preparation. All trainees accepted are given good guidance about preparatory reading. Once the course begins, all trainees undertake subject and information and communications technology (ICT) audits. Although each of the subjects has its own approach to auditing, the process

is thorough and in some cases, as with design and technology, physical education and modern foreign languages, very good at providing trainees with an early understanding of the breadth of subject knowledge and skills. Throughout the training year, the trainees are effectively supported in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. Access to good ICT resources, for example, supports the trainees in meeting the Standards.

6. Course documentation is of a high standard. The course reader for professional studies brings together a series of notes and articles to support the training sessions and is very helpful to trainees. Preparation for teaching pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) has not, in the past, been as strong as other areas. However, the provider is considering how to take better account of the full range of pupil groups within the partnership schools, including those from other European countries. The section in the reader on EAL is now relevant and interesting.

7. Central subject training is of high quality. Trainee evaluations and their portfolios show that it prepares them very well for teaching the subject. Through particular topics and subjects, tutors model effective teaching practice very effectively. This meaningful approach contributes to the high regard for central training expressed by trainees. Training in lesson planning for example is consistently good and this is exemplified in trainees' clearly expressed and confidently evaluated teaching objectives and learning intentions for pupils. External speakers enrich central training and contribute to the coherence between centre and school based training. Very effective use is made in schools of teachers with specific strengths across different subjects and areas of experience.

8. The procedures for assessing the trainees' achievements against the Standards are thorough and they are implemented consistently across subjects. Assignments contribute to the good progress that trainees make through the relevance of topics and very thorough marking that provides clear and constructive feedback to the trainees on how to improve. As the course progresses, trainees take increasing responsibility for identifying areas for development by reflecting on their own practice. Targets are followed through from one placement to another or from one period of the placement to the next. All concerned know what is expected and what progress is being made. Cause for concern procedures are clearly set out in course documentation and followed where necessary. The trainees collect their evidence in a portfolio and these are regularly checked by tutors and mentors in most cases. The peer appraisal of portfolios is effective and contributes, for example, to the improvements many trainees make in organising and presenting their portfolios.

Management and quality assurance

9. Selection procedures are very effective and result in the recruitment of good quality trainees in all subjects and on all routes offered. A wide range of challenging activities is used to assess the candidates' potential and some involve school-based mentors. Recruitment targets and numbers have increased in most subjects following the closure of music and geography courses. Completion rates have significantly improved. However, actual recruitment remains short of targets in many subjects, despite an increase in the proportion of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. The trainees are confident and committed to the course and to teaching. The vast majority succeed in qualifying to teach and gain employment in the partnership or other schools.

10. The overall leadership and management of the training are efficient and effective. The individual strengths of university staff and the distinctive features of partnership schools are deployed skilfully to support good quality training and outcomes. A high level of professional trust has been built across the partnership. This provides a good foundation for innovations stimulated by national, local, school and university-based initiatives; for example, the introduction of peer evaluation and assessment through paired working on the first placement. This was achieved by the programme leader working in close partnership with schools. Effective subject leadership contributes to improvement. Subject management in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education indicates that it is of particularly high quality.

11. Up-to-date and imaginative professional development for tutors and mentors contributes to the coherence and effectiveness of training. Attendance at mentors' conferences has steadily improved and is now good. Work across the institute of education on inclusion has stimulated cross-phase collaboration within the university and with the local authority. This has started to develop an improved and shared understanding about English as an additional language (EAL) across the partnership. The university recognises the unrealised potential to enhance links between primary and secondary courses in order to strengthen trainees' understanding about transition.

12. The involvement of partnership schools in the management of the programme has developed and this contributes to the consistency of high quality training. The partnership committee has high expectations of initial teacher training and continuing professional development and pursues feedback by trainees and newly qualified teachers that identify any shortcomings. The development of school clusters, although at an early stage, is an example of an innovative approach to regional management that contributes to meeting trainees' diverse needs while maintaining consistently high quality.

13. The partnership agreement provides good guidance about roles, responsibilities and expectations. These are understood by trainers and trainees and are applied well. Informative documentation contributes to the clear sense of

guidance expressed across the partnership. This is underpinned by frequent and open communication - a particularly strong feature of subject training and mentoring. There are also good examples of very effective liaison between leadership of the programme and senior leadership in schools.

14. A good range of quality assurance procedures exist. The high frequency of lesson observations, followed up with weekly and periodic reviews facilitates continuous evaluation and target setting by trainees, school mentors and university tutors. This also provides early opportunities to identify and resolve any quality assurance issues. Most university tutors time their visits to identify and support any vulnerable trainees. However, greater definition should be given as to how additional checks at key points in the course ensure that trainers and mentors with different responsibilities contribute to quality assurance. There are variations, for example, in the way that professional mentors carry out their role in assuring the quality of school-based training. The most effective professional mentors follow-up their group meetings with trainees about generic issues with regular monitoring of provision and evaluation of individual outcomes in different subjects. This leads to precise target setting matched with differentiated support.

15. Assessment procedures are monitored well by the university. Joint observations are used effectively to moderate judgements. Good quality training for new mentors and trainees ensures that the Standards are clearly understood and consistently applied before signing-off. A good balance is achieved between lesson observations that focus on specific Standards and evaluation that takes account of wider evidence. The university makes effective use of reports by external examiners and the experience of its own staff who act as external examiners elsewhere. Issues are carefully considered and efficiently acted upon.

16. Improvement planning has good features. Reports from external examiners are now used systematically to inform the future direction of the course. This has started to make best practice within individual subjects more consistent. Evaluation of prior aims and actions to shape the direction of subject courses is now an expectation for all. A range of available evidence is used to show how the training has improved trainees' knowledge, skills, understanding and their readiness to teach. The provider's very good awareness of national research and initiatives has made a strong contribution to the improvements the partnership has planned.