

University of York

Langwith College
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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The University of York works in partnership with 43 schools and colleges to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. At the time of the inspection there were 121 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 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

- the strong coherence between the different elements of the training
- the very good and, at times, innovative programme of university-based training and the effective procedures for promoting consistent high quality school-based training
- the encouragement given to trainees to reflect on and evaluate their practice and to think critically
- the very effective partnership arrangements which ensure schools are strongly committed to improvement and are fully involved in the review, evaluation and development of the provision
- the very effective management and quality assurance procedures that support the promotion of very good training
- the good and improved quality of the self-evaluation and improvement planning and the partnership-wide commitment to collaboration in order to secure continuous improvement.

Points for consideration

- share the outcomes of trainees' subject auditing more fully with schools.

The quality of training

1. The overall quality of the training is outstanding. The course is very well structured to ensure that trainees meet the Standards. The central and school-based elements of the training are well sequenced and trainees receive a good range of suitable experiences, including Key Stage 2 and post-16. The comprehensive professional studies programme is well supported by further reading and appropriate web-based resources. Both subject and generic studies are contextualised by relevant practical experience in schools, providing a good, phased introduction to the classroom and good preparation for the block placements. The links between the subject and professional studies programmes are coherent and explicit, both at the centre and in schools. Training sessions have clear outcomes and are referenced to the Standards.
2. Centre-based trainers are particularly effective at modelling good teaching and learning. Much of the training is imaginative and innovative, reflecting current curricular issues by drawing upon recent and relevant research. Sessions provide good opportunities for trainees to engage and take an active role, for example, by developing resources and making presentations. Trainees benefit from the early focus on behaviour management in both generic and subject specific contexts. Good use is made of teachers, researchers and others to provide training in particular areas of expertise. Expectations of quality and coherence in the planning and delivery of sessions are clear. The practical nature of the training prepares trainees very well for teaching. They are given excellent guidance on planning which includes, from the outset, ways to address pupils' individual needs and assess learning outcomes. A strong focus on lesson observations and weekly evaluations encourages trainees to be reflective practitioners and critical thinkers. Their understanding of complex issues and how they relate these to their own practice as teachers, and to pupils' learning, is impressive.
3. Strategies to address trainees' individual needs are very effective. An audit of their subject knowledge at the start of the course is used well by trainees in the preparation of individual action plans. Trainees are active in their own subject knowledge development and they are encouraged to support each other by sharing expertise and resources. A good example of this is on the modern foreign languages course where trainees are matched together to develop their language skills during lunchtime meetings. However, the details of subject knowledge audits are not routinely shared with the placement school. Consequently, mentors do not always have the information to enable them to play a more active role in helping trainees to address their subject knowledge needs.
4. Flexibility in the requirement for teaching time in the first block placement is designed to take into account trainees' different skills and prior experiences. The decision to extend the time trainees spend in this placement has had the positive impact of enabling many of them to teach and assess whole units of work and preparing them more effectively for their main placement. Individual needs are also addressed through tutorials and review meetings with mentors. A particularly strong

feature of the course is the provision made for trainees to extend their learning beyond the requirements of the Standards through enrichment activities; for example, participating in school working parties, residentials and shadowing the work of a head of department. The associated assignments, planned to encourage critical reflection, are assessed at Master's level.

5. Improving the quality and consistency of mentoring has been a priority for the university and this has been addressed successfully. School-based subject training is well supported by guidance materials from the university. Trainees' receive high quality mentoring and regular feedback on their progress with specific targets linked to the Standards. However, not all targets are as clear as they could be. Trainees are encouraged to set their own targets and to review and evaluate their progress against the Standards. As a result most trainees have a very good understanding of their own development and what they need to do to improve.

6. Arrangements for the final assessment of trainees against the Standards are thorough and understood by all. Particularly good use is made of joint observations to ensure mentors fully understand their role in this process. There are effective procedures to identify trainees whose progress is a cause for concern and the extra visits and support they receive from the university is impressive. Internal and external moderation arrangements are rigorous and contribute to the highly effective arrangements for the assessment of trainees.

Management and quality assurance

7. The prospectus and the university's web site include comprehensive, clear and accurate information about the postgraduate course in education. Strenuous efforts have been made, in partnership with a local minority ethnic recruitment adviser, to increase the number of trainees from minority ethnic groups. All promotional material has been carefully constructed to ensure it reflects a commitment to cultural diversity. Although the number of applicants from minority ethnic groups remains modest, the university has had success in encouraging them to take up offers of course places. Candidates who are invited for interview are provided with clear and detailed information on the available training programmes.

8. The selection procedures meet the Requirements of *Qualifying to Teach*. The procedures are monitored and reviewed very carefully to ensure they identify suitable trainees and embody the principles of equality of opportunity. As a result withdrawal rates are low and trainees are successful in finding employment. Interviews, which are carried out by subject-specialist staff, incorporate a range of well-designed tasks to assess the trainees' subject knowledge and potential for teaching. Some subjects are very successful in ensuring that teachers are routinely and actively involved in the selection process but others have found this more difficult to achieve. Subject tutors gather initial information on candidates' strengths and weaknesses at the selection stage. They use this to advise those who are successful about appropriate pre-course activities to develop their skills.

9. The management of the training programme is impressive. The university works closely with its partner schools to provide an extremely well-organised course which is rooted in a strong culture of high professional expectations, and which encourages trainees to become reflective practitioners. The course is very skilfully managed by its director who has a good overview of the provision and is well supported by a very strong team of subject leaders. The partnership has responded very positively to the points for action and consideration in the last inspection report; in particular, the role of the Partnership Forum has been extended to ensure representatives from the schools are fully involved in the review, evaluation and strategic development of the course. There is a good range of opportunities for subject and professional mentors to deliver components of the central training.

10. The partnership agreement is comprehensive and well understood by all of those involved in the training. There is a separate agreement with local colleges related to their specific role in providing post-16 training opportunities. Communication between the university and the schools is very good: mentors and tutors maintain regular contact by e-mail and telephone. The use of a virtual learning environment is beginning to support the further development of the partnership. Resources are deployed effectively to support the training, both in the university and the partner schools.

11. Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the training are well defined. Well-considered training and support are provided for professional tutors and subject mentors. These contribute significantly to the high quality of much of the school-based training. The majority of subject mentor meetings are very well attended and they offer good opportunities for tutors and mentors to collaborate in managing and developing the subject-based dimension of training. Those who are unable to attend meetings are supplied subsequently with the relevant materials. When appropriate, tutors undertake additional visits to mentors in school to ensure they are well supported in the execution of their role and to encourage attendance at meetings.

12. Procedures for monitoring the policies for equality of opportunity and race relations are comprehensive and effective. Course tutors have worked closely with the university equal opportunities officer who has also led a training session on related issues with the trainees. An action plan has been developed specifically to support black and minority ethnic trainees. Due account is taken of other legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. These policies are applied rigorously to all aspects of the provision, including selection.

13. Professional tutors carry out their role in assuring the quality of school-based training effectively. They routinely monitor lesson and weekly review documentation, carry out joint lesson observations, and offer good quality support for specific trainees where necessary. The number of monitoring visits university link tutors make to schools has been extended and their nature refocused in response to inconsistencies in mentoring highlighted at the last inspection. As a result there is now a high level of consistency in the quality of the work of mentors and, more specifically, in the reliability of the final assessment of trainees.

14. The processes for monitoring the assessment of trainees are very effective. There are secure procedures for the internal moderation of assignments and teaching quality. The final assessment is rigorous and the provider benefits considerably from the input of a team of subject-specialist external examiners. All outcomes from their detailed and challenging reports are very carefully considered and acted upon.

15. Strenuous efforts have been made to ensure the annual review and development cycle is based on a rigorous analysis of data, in line with the recommendation from the previous report. There is a strong commitment to improvement across the whole partnership. Self-evaluation is rigorous, comprehensive and accurate. Information gathered; including the analysis of trainee evaluations, the detailed annual subject reviews, data provided by the Training and Development Agency and external examiners' reports is used to produce a very detailed analysis of the programme that identifies good practice for wider dissemination, issues arising and actions to be taken. Trainees are asked to evaluate both university and school-based training at various stages of the course and their feedback is shared directly with their placement school. Mentors and professional tutors are actively involved in the evaluation of the partnership's work at the regular meetings. Subject and whole course reviews are very detailed and rigorous and are skilfully aligned together. Whole course improvement planning is now of very good quality.