

Brunel University

Halsbury Building
Brunel University
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 3PH

A primary 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).

Introduction

Brunel University works in partnership with around 250 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a PGCE in the 5-11 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 158 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

- the very well structured and coherent training programme which is intellectually rigorous, and fully meets the Requirements
- the teaching of professional studies
- the highly effective university-based training which prepares trainees very well for teaching
- the attention paid to meeting trainees' individual needs
- the rigorous recruitment procedures which result in the selection of high calibre trainees from diverse backgrounds
- the strong and well managed partnership which successfully provides trainees with good school-based training
- the high quality mentor training which results in trainees receiving very good support
- the very effective monitoring of quality at all levels which enables the partnership to have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The structure and the content of the training programmes meet the Requirements very well. They ensure that trainees gain good knowledge and experience in the key stages for which they are being trained. Professional studies are embedded throughout the course, as are the principles of *Every Child Matters*. The provision for those elements of the course covering special educational needs, assessment of pupils' learning and English as an additional language is particularly strong. There is a very good balance between central and school-based training; intellectual rigour underpins provision, and theory and practice are linked very well.
2. The course is very coherent and trainees understand how the different elements complement one another. This is because careful planning enables trainers to make explicit links between subjects and aspects such as special educational needs or assessment in the classroom. Directed tasks and assignments are rooted in classroom practice so that a clear link is established between taught sessions and practical teaching. For example, the main assignment ensures that trainees explore in depth the theory behind special educational needs through practical research in each of the core subjects.
3. The quality of training is consistently high. Tutors bring a good range and depth of experience and expertise to the course. All university tutors have published research in their areas of expertise and draw on this to enhance trainees' learning. For example, excellent use is made of current research into speaking and listening and the teaching of mathematics to gifted and talented pupils. University-based training is clearly focused on addressing the Standards and provides a good theoretical basis whilst also modelling good primary teaching strategies. School-based training very effectively builds on university provision. School mentors facilitate the successful completion of school-based activities. Their high quality feedback identifies strengths and weaknesses, provides subject-specific advice and informs sharply focused targets for improvement. Resources are of high quality and include web-based materials that are essential to trainees' research, such as the mini-beast workshop in science. As a result of this training environment, trainees are confident, enthusiastic and demonstrate good teaching strategies and subject knowledge. They make good progress towards meeting the Standards.
4. A major strength of the course is the very effective way that trainees' individual needs are identified and very good quality, differentiated support is provided. This aspect of the training is highly valued by trainees. Their subject knowledge and their understanding of pedagogy are meticulously audited, tracked and supported. Mentors and link tutors provide very good support for individual needs during school experiences. Trainees have a strong voice through their group representatives and feel valued and well supported. Where necessary, there is access to high quality additional support for those trainees with learning difficulties or a physical disability. Trainees with particular skills are extended through opportunities to act as co-researchers or to provide peer support.

5. Trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards is assessed well. Regular lesson observations, self-evaluations of very high quality and very useful reflective logs contribute significantly to the range of evidence used to demonstrate success. Although there is some variation in the way that different school mentors record trainees' short-term progress towards the Standards, the summary assessments of each school experience are comprehensive and founded on solid evidence. Assignments are rigorously marked to provide secure evidence of progress in subject knowledge and pedagogy. Trainees receive very detailed and helpful feedback that shows them how to improve still further.

Management and quality assurance

6. The partnership is very well led and managed and this results in high quality training that enables trainees to meet the Standards at a good or very good level. Improvement following inspections has been good and all issues raised have been addressed very well. The partnership has successfully managed the recent transfer to the Uxbridge campus and the consequent increase in the number of partnership schools. There are several significant strengths that contribute to the high quality of the provision.

7. The university works very well with its partner schools to recruit and select trainees from diverse backgrounds. Publicity materials are informative and attract a large number of applicants from underrepresented groups such as males and those from minority ethnic heritages. Selection processes are rigorous and ensure that only those candidates with the best potential to teach are selected. Identity and criminal record checks are carried out assiduously. The preparatory work given to successful candidates before the course begins is excellent because it helps them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their subject knowledge and to gain valuable experiences in an initial school placement.

8. The partnership is very strong and schools play a major role in training as well as providing good school placements. The roles of school-based mentors, link tutors and training co-ordinators are very well defined so that trainees know exactly how they will be supported while in school. This is because mentor training is very well organised and of high quality, and provides not only briefing on responsibilities but also training in mentoring skills. It is offered at different levels, enabling experienced mentors the opportunity of deepening their skills and gaining accreditation if required. Complementing this training is a first-rate set of handbooks to support each school experience, including detailed subject-specific guidance on how tasks and other activities should be undertaken. Schools value the very effective communications with the university, particularly the prompt responses to queries and the contacts with link tutors.

9. The management of the partnership is effective partly because there are very well defined systems for monitoring its work. It takes very good account of feedback from trainees about their experiences in both central and school-based

training, acting promptly to adjust provision where appropriate. This information is supplemented by that from link tutors, mentors, external examiners and extensive benchmarking data, all of which provides the university with a very clear picture of its strengths and areas for development. As a result, it is able to draw up well targeted plans for development that bring about improvement from year to year. Overall, the partnership is characterised by a very strong commitment to improvement.

10. The assessments of trainees' written work and practical teaching are accurate and consistent because of excellent systems to moderate judgements. These systems enable link tutors to check mentors' assessments of trainees' teaching, conduct joint observations with mentors, and to moderate judgements with other link tutors in the partnership. This commitment to quality assurance pervades all areas of the training programme and enables trainees to have confidence in the assessments made of their progress.