

Institute of Education

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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Institute of Education works in partnership with 345 schools to provide secondary PGCE initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in English, English with drama, information and communications technology, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, citizenship, social science, music, business and economics education, art and design, religious education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 749 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 structure and content of the training programme
- the commitment to, and training in, inclusion
- the prominence given to national developments, such as *Every child matters*, in the training
- the strong ethos of collegiality
- the good balance between agreed, common procedures and responsiveness to the needs of trainees and trainers
- the very thorough internal and external course review procedures and the extensive use made of stakeholder feedback to improve the provision
- the work of partnership managers
- trainees' access to the Institute's impressive academic and material resources.

Points for consideration

- supplementing existing quality assurance procedures with the regular, independent scrutiny of trainees' files to ensure that agreed procedures are being followed consistently.

The quality of training

1. The Institute's secondary course was last inspected in 2005, when the quality of the training was considered to be at least good. Its strengths included the training in inclusion; the high quality school-based tasks, which contributed to the course's coherence; the way that good subject audits enabled trainers to assess and meet trainees' individual needs; and the systems to monitor trainees' progress. Since that time, the Institute has maintained the quality of its course and has introduced a number of changes which have resulted in improvement.
2. The course content has been updated to reflect national developments. The *Every child matters* agenda, for example, is covered thoroughly and at an early stage of the course. Trainees develop a good understanding of the importance of working with different agencies and of the contribution their subject can make to the five outcomes. The content also includes the latest thinking on assessment for learning and personalised learning.
3. The structure of the course remains a strength. A particular benefit for the trainees is the opportunity to meet colleagues and tutors at the Institute for one day each week during the lengthy first placement. There is a very good balance between theory and practice, and because of this, the trainees are prepared thoroughly for their first teaching experience. Trainees' planning, for example, is very good; their lessons are firmly based on clear and pertinent objectives and framed with very precise learning outcomes which enable them to assess pupils' progress and to evaluate lessons very effectively.
4. The quality of the school-based training remains high because of the imaginative and energetic ways with which the Institute has sought to develop the skills of school-based trainers, and because of the improvements to the documentation that underpins the school experience. The assessment record file and the school-based tasks have been refined annually to provide a firm basis for school-based trainers to support and assess the trainees. Their clarity and conciseness are much appreciated by busy staff in schools. Clusters of schools are encouraged by the Institute to collaborate in order to enrich their training in school-based professional studies. For example, trainees in one cluster are greatly benefiting from the rich variety of experience provided by expertise from three different schools. The great majority of trainees responding to evaluation questionnaires report a positive experience of their school-based training and the Institute's tutors are quick to intervene when this is not the case.
5. Many of the changes to the course have resulted in clear improvements to the quality of training because they are stimulated by the constant evaluation to which the course is subjected. The structure of the modern foreign languages sessions, for example, has been modified to good effect in response to trainees' feedback. These well considered changes often involve refining the ways trainees' individual needs

are met. The systematic approach to auditing subject knowledge in music, for example, was introduced as a result of an inspection.

6. The introduction of a virtual learning environment has significantly enhanced the course. Trainees are very enthusiastic not just about the availability online of a wealth of materials such as lecture notes and pre-session reading, but also about the opportunities the virtual learning environment provides for them to share teaching ideas and to keep in touch with their peers during their time in schools. Most importantly, it enables them to engage in debates about pertinent educational issues. Citizenship trainees, for example, have had a useful discussion on how to teach pupils about homosexuality.

7. Developments in the course are also stimulated by several distinctive features enjoyed by the Institute. Its impressive resources, including its unique library and technological facilities, are used very creatively by the tutors to keep their courses relevant and challenging. Tutors, including those who have been recruited since the last inspection, have great expertise in and a passion for their subject. This has a profound effect on their trainees, who share their enthusiasm, not just for the subject, but for teaching it in London schools. The close involvement of the tutors in national initiatives ensures that their courses are not only up-to-date but often ahead of the game. Finally, the availability on the doorstep of many key external institutions is exploited very effectively by tutors to enrich their courses in highly original ways. For example, trainees gain insight into how film can be used in their teaching through a collaborative project with the British Film Institute.

Management and quality assurance

8. The strengths from the last report remain. The secondary PGCE course continues to achieve a highly productive balance between agreed, common procedures and flexibility in subject planning and in adapting to trainees' individual needs. The strong ethos of collegiality backed up by the Institute's impressive academic resources sustains a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation.

9. Procedures for recruitment and selection are effective and well tried; the Institute continues to enrol committed, enthusiastic and very well qualified trainees, and is notably successful in attracting relatively high numbers from minority ethnic groups. The quality of pre-course tasks sent to successful candidates varies somewhat, but all subjects require trainees to write about and reflect upon their prior experience and subject knowledge before joining the course.

10. Subjects continue to be very well managed by conscientious, well-qualified subject leaders and the two course directors are suitably served by a number of appropriately convened committees. The management structure for initial teacher education and the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the partnership are clearly explained in well-produced handbooks. Links between the various aspects of

the course are clear, both at the Institute and in schools where professional tutors (called 'managing mentors' in this partnership) have the responsibility for providing a substantial proportion of the professional studies programme.

11. The Institute is acutely aware of the problems of managing such a large partnership and of ensuring its effectiveness. The high turnover of subject mentors (known as 'subject co-tutors') in London schools, noted in the previous report, remains one of the Institute's greatest challenges. The organisation of schools into clusters provides a measure of continuity, although as vehicles for training, clusters inevitably vary in their effectiveness, and some schools continue to work independently. The Institute recognises the need to be flexible in its approach to inter-school collaboration. Eight partnership managers oversee groups of clusters and fulfil a key ambassadorial role in supporting managing mentors, ensuring procedures are being followed and promoting regional training that exploits the strengths of particular schools. Their contribution to the management of the partnership is a very significant strength.

12. Communications across the partnership are very good and continue to improve. For example, an email consultation group of 20 managing mentors is proving a valuable way of involving school-based trainers in decision making. School-based trainers know whom they should contact to help them to carry out their roles and find that responses are speedy and effective. Managing mentor and subject co-tutor training meetings are, on the whole, recognised as being useful, but attendance, particularly at some subject co-tutor meetings, continues to be variable.

13. The PGCE course is subject to a number of very effective review and evaluation procedures to ensure that high-quality training is maintained or enhanced and that good practice is common across the provision. These include trainees' evaluations of all aspects of the course, regular meetings of course tutors, and partnership managers' judgements on the quality of school-based training in each school. Trainees' responses to central training sessions are carefully considered to support decisions about the future. The annual course review process is extremely thorough, with course leaders having to respond to prescribed performance data and trainees' evaluations. External examiners' reports include useful evaluative comments on the quality of the trainees seen, the quality of support for trainees and the extent to which previous recommendations have been acted upon. The chief external examiner's overview report is exemplary in the thoroughness of its assessment of the quality of the partnership. Despite this abundance of information and the rigour with which it is used to inform high quality action planning, trainees' files are not always scrutinised in enough detail to ensure that agreed procedures, such as the tracking of trainees' progress towards the Standards, are being consistently followed.