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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Cambridge works in partnership with around 250 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers PGCE training for primary 5-11 or early years 3-7 age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 164 trainees on the courses.

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 strength of the partnership and its commitment to training
- the very good use of experts in their field of education, both from the university and from training schools, to deliver the training
- the coherence between the different elements of the training
- the focus at each stage of the course on meeting trainees' individual needs
- the criteria for assessing subject knowledge in each core subject
- the role of the personal tutor in monitoring the care and progress of the trainees
- the rapid response to issues raised by schools, and through evaluation, that leads to improved course structure and content.

Points for consideration

- improving training in information and communication technology (ICT) as a discrete subject.

The quality of training

1. The good quality training identified at the last inspection has been maintained and further developed. It has many very good features. The content is well designed by expert practitioners. A good programme of lectures, workshops and independent learning is linked carefully to school-based tasks and assignments. Sessions are well organised, include a good range of interactive activities and are mapped to the Standards. Current educational developments, such as the Rose review of teaching early reading, are fully embedded. There is good coverage of the National Curriculum, the Primary National Strategy and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, except in ICT. Here training is not so effective because less attention is paid to teaching ICT as a discrete subject.

2. Coherence between the different aspects of the training is very good. Tasks carried out during the home school experience, at the start of the course, are linked carefully to taught sessions and prepare trainees very effectively for the remainder of the training. Professional studies sessions are placed at the beginning of each week, enabling themes to be followed up in subject sessions during the week. School placements are planned carefully with clear expectations for trainees. This ensures that school-based training builds effectively upon university-based learning. Theme days provide very good opportunities for trainees to explore, for example, storytelling, performance, using the natural environment and visiting galleries and museums. They also give trainees a good understanding of cross-curricular learning.

3. The university makes very good use of a wide range of expertise and the quality of training is enhanced by the recent and research interests of trainers. For example, training in behaviour management is led by an international expert. Lectures, workshops and a visit to a training school lead into a well planned assignment on behaviour management. University tutors also work very effectively with well qualified practising teachers from partnership schools.

4. Training takes very good account of individual needs. Trainees' subject knowledge is audited and assessed throughout the course, and trainees take responsibility for planning their own learning. Their development is monitored rigorously by tutors and mentors who are readily available and provide high quality support. Further individual support, where required, ensures that all trainees are well prepared for the classroom. -

5. Trainees' progress is monitored rigorously. Lesson observations are well-written and provide clear guidance about the next steps in the trainees' development. The comprehensive system of weekly reviews, interim reports and final reports on school placements is used very effectively by mentors and tutors to ensure that trainees are able to progress well. 'Statements of personal goals' help to focus trainees' work on each placement.

6. Assignments are well designed to assess trainees' understanding of subject pedagogy. They draw effectively on work in schools, are clearly referenced to the Standards and are appropriately staged throughout the course. Marking is rigorous and provides very clear guidance to the trainees on how to improve.

Management and quality assurance

7. Thorough recruitment and selection procedures result in the enrolment of very high calibre trainees. Competition for places is strong. All trainees are well qualified in their degrees and many of them have significant experience of working in schools. Retention and completion rates are high. The university has numerous former trainees who teach in partnership schools and act as mentors or school coordinators. This benefits partnership development.

8. The intake is monitored in terms of ethnicity, gender and age profile. The partnership continues to make efforts to increase recruitment from minority ethnic groups. It has targeted Peterborough, with its large minority ethnic population, and has set up specific satellite recruitment and training in the city, including the secondment of a minority ethnic recruitment officer. Although applications from the area and from mature candidates have improved, recruitment from underrepresented groups remains an area for development.

9. This is a partnership where every member is valued for the part they play, from the newest trainee to the most experienced headteacher. Each trainee is allocated a personal tutor who supports and monitors them throughout their training. This is a key role that is much appreciated by trainees. Inclusion and equality of opportunity are high on the agenda. Trainees and trainers are not disadvantaged because of where they live. Where necessary the partnership provides time and funds for trainees' travel, accommodation and subsistence. The partnership pays particular attention to those individuals needing support. For example, it established a male support group, having identified the difficulties some men face in making good progress towards the Standards.

10. Schools are very committed to the partnership and a very high number of school-based trainers attend mentor and coordinator training, lead training sessions and are members of management groups. The partnership standing committee, made up of representatives from the university, headteachers, school coordinators, recently and newly qualified teachers and trainees, is very much empowered to make decisions. Recommendations from the group are swiftly put into action by course managers. For example, as a result of headteachers raising awareness of school workforce reform, course content has been expertly modified to prepare trainees to manage the work of other adults in the classroom.

11. Management at an operational level in the university is very effective; the three programme managers work closely in the delivery of the programme. They, together with the head of faculty, also carry out their strategic role successfully.

They all have a high level of commitment to reviewing and evaluating provision, and to contributing to the training programme.

12. The partnership agreement is comprehensive and includes procedures to ensure that trainers have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to carry out their roles effectively. For example, criteria related to the assessment of subject knowledge in each core subject have been issued to mentors. This is an impressive development and the criteria are used very well by mentors to improve trainees' subject expertise.

13. A key strength is the involvement of three designated training schools. They make a substantial contribution to the partnership in training, support for management, and in quality assurance.

14. The partnership gathers a wide range of evaluative evidence to inform course review and development. Data is analysed carefully and external examiners' reports are thorough. The improvement cycle is very well informed by the outcomes of evaluation and development planning is very well established. Overall, there is a culture of continuous improvement and a focus on high quality provision.