

Northumbria University

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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report

2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Northumbria works in partnership with about 29 schools to provide a secondary initial teacher training course for the 11-16 age range, with post-16 enhancement, in art and design. At the time of the inspection there were 17 trainees.

Context

The inspection was carried out by two 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 2006/2007, 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

Standards: Grade 1

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

Key strengths

- the outstanding leadership of the programme and the highly effective partnership which result in the continuous improvement of the quality of the course
- the excellent use of local resources leading to exciting opportunities for trainees
- the very well designed selection procedures which ensure the recruitment of highly committed and capable trainees
- the highly effective matching of provision to trainees' strengths and needs
- the contribution of the partnership schools to the excellent quality of training
- the strong emphasis on contemporary and innovative practice
- the use of a wide range of evidence leading to very effective improvement plans.

The quality of training

1. The partnership provides excellent training. This is achieved through a highly relevant course which makes outstanding use of local resources and the mutually supportive partnership to match training to trainees' individual qualities and needs. As a result, trainees take a high level of responsibility for their development and quickly make progress.
2. Well qualified, experienced and informed trainers at the university and in partnership schools share a strong passion for art and education that keeps course content alive, challenging and provocative. Central to the course is the clear focus on training teachers of art, craft and design whose development and effectiveness are directly related to their own creativity. The course is very effective in developing trainees and trainers who are highly committed to both professional and personal development. Very strong features are evident where trainees clearly understand the dual role of artist and educator, as exemplified by one trainee who has developed a sketchbook approach to lesson planning. Trainees are very well prepared to shape the future vision and direction of the subject through a strong emphasis on contemporary and innovative practice.
3. Schools are highly committed to training and trainees consistently evaluate the quality of training and support they receive very positively. Trainees are very well equipped with the skills to adapt, develop and succeed in schools with different challenges and opportunities. Trainees have developed their skills and understanding particularly well when set tasks which link with departmental improvement priorities. The most effective training combines a high level of responsibility with support that encourages self help strategies. For example, trainees respond quickly and well to mentors' prompts by sharpening the focus on learning in their written evaluations of teaching.
4. Collaborative work between course leaders, partnership schools and a network of artists and educators makes a key contribution to the effectiveness of training. Excellent links with the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the Shipley Art Gallery of Contemporary Craft are established. Involvement in national initiatives such as 'Big Draw' is integral and enhances trainees' experience.
5. The programme is carefully planned to enable trainees to develop their teaching skills progressively, with periods of university training before each placement allowing key themes to be introduced early and consolidated later. The constantly evolving course prepares trainees to meet the current requirements of the subject and schools very effectively. Professional studies are up to date in their presentation of whole school themes relating to *Every Child Matters*, and trainees gain a wider perspective by considering these with others following different routes to qualified teacher status. Curriculum studies build coherently on this by, for example, looking at how in art and design teachers teach literacy, promote thinking and improve the motivation of boys by valuing the crafts. Many schools provide

comprehensive professional studies programmes that help trainees consider how issues raised in central training apply to school settings.

6. Individual qualities and needs are defined clearly from the start, and the thorough skills audit is used to inform the detailed individual training plan. The course structure capitalises on the depth of subject knowledge, understanding and skills of trainees, for example through the popular 'microteaching' approaches. Schools usefully exploit the expertise some trainees bring and enable trainees to equip pupils with the means to express sophisticated ideas. Training also addresses weaknesses very well, through the use of individual training plans which set suitably challenging targets.

7. Trainees' progress towards the Standards is frequently accelerated by training that models good practice. This is a strong feature of training in schools, where trainees are clearly able to see good practice by the staff. A further example is the very good teaching studio at the university which is a model learning environment. The high quality of visual presentation and the methods of differentiation demonstrated in central training resources are mirrored in trainees' own lesson preparation and teaching materials.

8. Assessment is well evidenced, rigorously moderated, and contributes strongly to training. Assessments recorded by visiting link tutors set a high standard for the skilful use of observation to identify strengths or weaknesses and to set clear and precise targets. Assignments are relevant and rigorously marked. Frequent reference to the Standards, and an emphasis sensitively and appropriately changed from the first to second placement, enable trainees to monitor their progress and clarify their emerging needs.

Management and quality assurance

9. A very rigorous process selects trainees who have very good qualifications and can communicate their passion for art and design. A challenging variety of assessment tasks, conducted in schools, includes written communication and presentation to students. A better balance of gender and ethnicity has been achieved through strategic recruitment, and progression to employment as teachers is very good.

10. Exceptionally strong leadership and the effective collaboration of the partnership result in the excellent quality of training. The programme leader is highly credible to schools, other agencies and trainees, and combines excellent understanding of national developments with extremely good knowledge of local resources. The central contribution of schools to the quality of training is very evident. Expertise is deployed well through visits by the whole cohort to observe strong features of departments, such as outstanding textiles work. School staff with strong expertise, such as the chief examiner for the subject, contribute to university-based training. Schools provide seven skilled mentors as link tutors who cross

moderate assessment, support schools in dealing with trainees at risk, and contribute to course review and training for mentors. There are regular, well used opportunities for school staff to meet with university staff to review and develop the quality of training.

11. Schools provide good venues for training. They fully meet the appropriate partnership agreement, and staff offer generous commitment to trainees. Profiles of each school aid the matching of trainees to placements, though the use of departmental self evaluation to refine matching still further is at an early stage.

12. School-based trainers carry out their responsibilities well because of the good preparation and support they receive. Communications, including the handbook, contribute well to the good consistency across the partnership. Administration is highly efficient, for example in ensuring that checks to safeguard pupils are in place. Regular training meetings are well timed to help trainers prepare for immediate priorities. Visits to schools by link tutors or the programme leader supplement training and when school-based trainers raise concerns they get a swift and effective response. Effective management ensures that training and assessment are progressively challenging in each school placement, and that trainees provide evidence that they meet all the Standards consistently.

13. Secure procedures for the internal and external moderation of the assessment of trainees are in place. Link tutors visit schools towards the end of each placement to observe trainees' teaching and moderate evidence of progress towards the Standards. Well applied procedures ensure rigorous moderation: when trainees' progress causes concern, the programme leader acts as internal assessor, and the external examiner has provided thorough verification of the accuracy of final assessment.

14. Quality assurance procedures are good, with several very good features. The single subject programme is usefully supported by wider structures and systems of the university. Responsibilities are clearly defined, and staff development and risk management are highly effective.

15. Monitoring of training makes good use of a wide range of evidence. Outcomes and evaluations by trainees are analysed after each module. Evaluation of school-based training draws on all participants' views, and visiting tutors check entitlement and report on quality. Intervention by the programme leader follows where necessary, and schools are deselected when criteria cannot be met. Trainees have well understood formal and informal methods of expressing their views of all elements of the course, and their concerns are dealt with. Swift changes to the training programme, resources and placements have followed.

16. Link tutors make a key contribution to assuring and improving the quality of training across schools. Trainees' files illustrate how, for example, some subject mentors set much clearer expectations for trainees after the link tutor's visit. However, in some ways their role in guiding school-based trainers to improve their practice is limited. Joint observation and feedback are not routine, and schools do

not receive explicit comments on the quality of feedback and target setting by subject mentors. Occasionally this has meant an opportunity is missed to ensure a trainee makes faster progress.

17. A wide range of evidence, including Ofsted reports, assessments, feedback and comparisons with other providers, has been systematically used to write detailed improvement plans with a clear focus on the Standards. Implementation and monitoring of these plans have involved the whole partnership and led to significant change for the better. For example, trainees' lesson planning and evaluation show how well they are now prepared for their responsibilities in promoting race equality in schools. This typifies the whole-hearted approach to issues raised in the previous inspection. Overall, the honesty about shortcomings, the realism of action plans and the vigorous rate of change amply demonstrate the capacity for continuous improvement.