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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

Sheffield Hallam University works in partnership with 160 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a range of one and two-year and flexible PGCE courses and two and three-year undergraduate courses. English, religious education, modern foreign languages, design and technology, citizenship, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, physical education and science cover the 11-16 age range; applied ICT, business education and engineering cover the 14-19 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 466 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: 2

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The provider will receive a short inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the very good documentation, which provides very effective support for trainees and school-based staff
- the very good communications between the university and partner schools
- the good recruitment of under-represented groups, particularly black and minority ethnic and mature trainees
- the effective use of a wide range of strategies for monitoring developments to ensure good quality is maintained or improved
- the rigorous self-evaluation and critical review leading to high quality improvement planning.

Points for action

- clarifying information in course handbooks, particularly in relation to course designation
- ensuring that mentors in all subjects have sufficient contact with the subject tutor.

Points for consideration

- involving school-based trainers more in selection procedures
- improving collaborative work between subject tutors and mentors in the development of subject courses.

The quality of training

1. The structure and content of the programmes are designed well to help the trainees meet the Standards. The subject and general professional studies programmes are up-to-date and cover important recent developments in education. Programmes are coherent, well planned and regularly reviewed. Revisions are made in response to trainees' evaluations and national developments. Links between the central and school-based training are good, supporting well the connections between theory and practice. The balance of school placements works effectively.
2. The quality of the individual subject programmes is strong. Subject leadership is good and tutors have a high level of expertise including a good knowledge of current issues and research in their subjects. Some aspects of subject programmes are outstanding, such as the extensive subject enhancement provided throughout central and school-based design and technology courses. Tutors make good use of visiting speakers, for example in modern foreign languages where trainees appreciate the contribution of serving teachers, some of them mentors. Trainers frequently model good practice in teaching and learning. Tutors form good relationships with trainees who they support well throughout their training.
3. The university provides high quality generic training for new and advanced mentors and regular meetings for ITT coordinators. As a result, the majority of trainees are supported well by mentors through weekly meetings, personal support, regular written records of meetings and weekly targets. In some subjects, contact between the mentor and the tutor is limited and this adversely affects the quality of school-based training in those subjects.
4. The high quality of training across the partnership is enhanced by excellent course documentation in which the roles of different members of the partnership are clearly defined. Programme proformas, with completed examples, are helpful additions, and guidance on recording evidence against the Standards is clear. Further support for trainees and mentors is available via the new partnership web site, although this is not yet widely used beyond those schools in the pilot project.
5. Provision for meeting the individual needs of trainees is very good. Gaps in subject knowledge are addressed well through, for example, pre-course booster training in religious education and enhancement courses in modern foreign languages. In most subjects, audits are used well to identify weaknesses and develop trainees' subject knowledge. Schools make effective use of information about trainees' prior experience, enabling them to provide suitably differentiated programmes. Well targeted support is provided for trainees who are giving cause for concern, including extra tutor visits to the placement school.
6. Assessment procedures contribute well to the training. Trainees' progress is monitored systematically and effectively at the centre and in schools. Weekly meetings with mentors are used effectively to review progress and set appropriate targets. Formal lesson observations take place as required and trainees receive

regular feedback on their teaching. University tutors model good practice in their evaluations and feedback during visits to schools. The assignments provide an important unifying factor in the overall programme, enabling trainees to combine different elements well. The assignments are of good quality; they are well chosen and encourage trainees to develop as reflective practitioners. Feedback on assignments is detailed and helpful.

7. Trainees' progress is monitored well and there are rigorous procedures to assess those who are at the pass/fail border. This includes good support for mentors and extra visits from tutors to secure accurate judgements. External examiners provide well substantiated verification of the accuracy of final assessment.

Management and quality assurance

8. Selection procedures are designed well to meet all statutory requirements. Candidates from underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply and are offered taster courses. This has led to the university exceeding the Training and Development Agency's black and minority ethnic voluntary recruitment target. The number of mature trainees recruited to the programme is also higher than average due to the range of flexible and part-time routes offered. Trainees are well qualified and suited to the courses they undertake. In all subjects, retention levels are high.

9. Applicants receive comprehensive and accurate information about courses via the university web site and course prospectus. However, some course handbooks provide confused information, and as a result, not all trainees are clear about course designation. Candidates receive individual interviews from subject specialist tutors, but the involvement of school-based trainers is limited.

10. The planning of programmes in collaboration with partner schools has improved since the last inspection through combining the work of the ITT coordinator' group and the partnership steering committee, leading to improvements in the consistency of school-based training. The new partnership committee allows for a good exchange of ideas between ITT coordinators and university tutors; an activity which is further supported by tutors during moderation visits to schools. Programme leaders meet regularly with many of the partnership's ITT coordinators, to review and develop policy. Collaborative work between subject tutors and mentors is less well established.

11. The partnership agreement handbook informs trainers very well of their responsibilities. Trainers are given very good guidance on centre-based training, formative and summative assessment procedures, professional expectations and trainee entitlements. Communications between the centre and schools are very good, enhanced by the appointment of a partnership operations manager who organises the extensive database. As a result, partnership arrangements run very smoothly.

12. Effective self-evaluation, critical review and action planning ensure improvements to subject and course programmes. Programme managers reflect very well on issues raised by external and internal evaluations. These include ITT coordinator and mentor meetings, moderation visits to schools, trainee and newly qualified teacher surveys and consultations with other providers. The good quality action planning prioritises actions, assigns responsibilities and includes appropriate success criteria.

13. The university employs a wide range of useful strategies for monitoring developments to ensure good quality is maintained or improved. Tutors oversee the quality of school-based training through early tutorial discussions in the placement schools, analysis of formal trainee evaluations and end-of-placement reports, records of mentor meetings and formal lesson observation records. Systems are in place to evaluate effectively equality of opportunity and the promotion of good race relations. Some flexible routes which had poor retention and completion rates have been replaced by full-time options and trainees are counselled well to take appropriate courses to meet their needs. The good quality of teaching and learning at the centre is secured by well established performance management and appraisal systems which include peer supported reviews of learning, teaching and assessment, personal reflections and target setting.

14. Planning for improvement is good and is demonstrated through the current piloting of a new model of partnership which involves tutors acting as whole school moderators. This is designed to enhance quality assurance by enabling a closer relationship to develop between the centre and schools. In their improvement planning, subject leaders make good use of Ofsted and external examiners' reports, together with feedback from trainees, although they make little systematic use of mentor responses.