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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2006/07

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Introduction

The University of Wolverhampton works in partnership with 112 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses in design and technology, English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science for the 11-16 age range, in information and communication technology (ICT) for the 11 – 18 age range and in business studies for the 14 – 19 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 168 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 training 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 very good coherence between all elements of the training
- the excellent individualised training programmes for trainees
- the very well structured assessment of trainees against the Standards
- the very strong partnership arrangements
- the strong and committed leadership of the subject programmes and the provision as a whole
- the impressive improvement planning and its very positive impact on the provision.

Points for consideration

- developing further the quality assurance role of school co-ordinators
- reviewing the selection of, and provision for, trainees following the flexible route.

The quality of training

1. The structure and content of the programme are well planned to provide every opportunity for trainees to meet the Standards. Trainees are provided with placements which ensure a good breadth and balance of experiences. The primary placement is timed well to enable trainees to reflect on their previous secondary teaching experience and to tailor their Year 7 lessons to better meet the prior attainment of pupils. Similarly ICT trainees receive very early training in post-14 teaching in order to maximise opportunities for them to teach in key stages 4 and 5 during their first school placement. Subject programmes take account of national developments and use expertise from within partnership schools to provide trainees with practical illustrations of how initiatives are applied in school contexts. For example, mathematics trainees are aware of the importance and role of numeracy in the national diplomas due to be introduced in 14-19 education. However, the full scope of vocational developments and qualification opportunities in some subjects, such as science, modern foreign languages and design and technology, are not fully explored.

2. The elements of the course combine very well so that trainees understand the role of teachers within their subject and their broader educational responsibilities. University-based subject leaders play a central role in monitoring and assessing trainees both in their subject and general professional studies. Consequently, trainees see the relevance of tasks and activities to their long-term professional development and aspects of the course are contextualised well. For example, ICT trainees are provided with clear guidance about how to manage behaviour in a classroom with a suite of computers. School-based mentors and co-ordinators are fully aware of course requirements and provide effective support to enable trainees to fulfil tasks and activities. Lesson observation feedback is detailed, constructive and identifies clear targets for improvement.

3. The quality of school and university-based training provides a strong preparation for teaching. Initial booster courses strengthen trainees' knowledge and address particular areas of the subject, for example aspects of grammar in English. In design and technology, trainees benefit from a university-based personal project which enables them to address areas of comparative personal weakness. Provision is also strengthened by a good focus upon health and safety which incorporates expertise from both partnership schools and the university's school of engineering and built environment, and leads to national accreditation. Early emphasis is placed on trainees' skills in planning and assessment. In the case of modern foreign languages, trainees helpfully evaluate pupils' progress over a series of lessons. School-based training reinforces university provision and helps trainees connect the theoretical aspects with practical teaching. Support for schools is clear, effective and systematic. For example, in science the university provides a helpful guide to the characteristics of good school-based training sessions.

4. The course is planned well to meet the individual needs of trainees. The subject knowledge audit is used effectively to establish trainees' initial needs and

these are addressed appropriately through school and university-based training. Physical education trainees are required to gain coaching qualifications prior to starting the course in order to broaden their subject knowledge. The enhancement of subject knowledge in modern foreign languages, including a French exchange to Amiens, results in a very high proportion of trainees being able to offer two languages up to at least Key Stage 3. The record of professional development includes weekly target setting and regular reviews. Targets address the particular needs of trainees, both in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogy, and enable them to take concrete steps to meet the Standards. The effectiveness of the second school placement is enhanced by trainees' thorough action plans which ensure mentors quickly identify and address areas for development.

5. Assessment is timely, accurate and consistent. Assignments help trainees to develop their subject and professional skills and effectively require them to conduct research during their placements. These are rigorously assessed and moderated. Formal lesson observations take place at least once a week and written feedback is closely monitored by university-based tutors. Helpfully, during the first placement, trainees are assessed against 'essential' and 'desirable' Standards and are either awarded a pass or fail. These robust procedures provide an effective platform for the second placement and the setting of both experiential and qualitative targets.

6. A very small number of trainees are pursuing the flexible pathway route which enables them to train to be a teacher when the full-time programme would not be appropriate to their individual needs and circumstances. At times, there is a tension between these trainees' requirements and expectations and what the university can provide through its partner schools. The trainees' experience of the course is largely through good distance learning materials. Contact with tutors is excellent but the e-mail forum between trainees is not functioning sufficiently effectively to provide strong peer support and there are no opportunities for them to meet as a group. Due to personal circumstances, it is often difficult for trainees to participate in many aspects of the full-time taught programme, however, those trainees who have taken the initiative, speak positively about their experiences.

Management and quality assurance

7. The process of selecting trainees is rigorous and ensures consistency between subjects. Successful campaigns have improved recruitment and most subjects now recruit at, or near, their target numbers. The involvement of schools in the assessment of potential trainees is an excellent feature of this very good selection process. The requirement for prospective trainees to spend time in a partner school, following their selection interview, allows school-based mentors and coordinators to assess trainees, provides a rigorous moderation of the judgements made at the selection interview and at the same time strengthens the partnership links. Revised selection strategies for the flexible route are currently being developed. These aim to ensure that those trainees selected have not only the potential to become

qualified teachers but also the necessary independent learning skills and ability to take control of their own training.

8. Retention is generally good, but in those subjects where it remains an issue, thorough analysis has been undertaken and action implemented. In business studies, for example, analysis of withdrawals suggests this is linked to late applicants and, as a result, strategies have been introduced to improve the preparedness of and support for those falling into this category. The very good selection process is reflected in pass rates and employment rates among trainees that are higher than national average rates. The partnership demonstrates real strengths in promoting equal opportunities for all in its selection process and during training. The recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups, which in ICT is approximately 60% of trainees, and the subsequent support they receive during the training is exemplary and reflects the university's success in meeting the aims of its race equality policy.

9. There is very clear evidence that the partnership's excellent management and quality assurance arrangements are being used very effectively to drive improvement. The constant updating and improvement of subject programmes, the feedback provided to schools on the quality of their provision, the use of teacher moderators, the strategies being introduced to improve retention rates, the improvements in the provision for design and technology and the quality and consistency of provision in physical education all stem from the excellent improvement planning process.

10. The good quality of training is the result of the excellent leadership and management of the provision as a whole and of the individual subject programmes. The university team is a well integrated and supportive group of professionals who share examples of good practice across the subject programmes in order to establish high quality training for all. University-based subject leaders ensure that subject training is constantly updated to incorporate the latest developments. Subject leaders react promptly to emerging issues, whether at subject or school level and are proactive in introducing new procedures and processes to improve provision. New subject leaders have been recruited to the ICT, physical education and modern foreign languages programmes. Effective induction procedures ensure continuity and a very smooth transition, while at the same time enabling the new subject leaders to bring their extensive, recent school experience, very evident commitment to their subjects, and their energy and enthusiasm, to bear on improving provision and promoting high quality training. For example, the new physical education subject leader has initiated improvements in the training offered to school-based mentors. These are having a significant impact on the quality of support and training offered to physical education trainees in partner schools. Schools are fully involved in the management, development and quality assurance of the programme and are well represented on the steering committee that oversees the provision.

11. Very good partnership arrangements promote excellent relationships with partner schools and provide an effective framework within which school-based trainers are able to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Robust communication

systems are in place between partner schools and the university. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all parties. The comprehensive and accessible support documentation and the excellent training for school-based mentors and coordinators ensure this. In addition, there are robust procedures for reviewing the quality of training provided by schools, for communicating their strengths and areas for development, for supporting them in such developments and also good evidence of the university's preparedness to deselect schools when they are not providing an appropriate quality of training.

12. Excellent training for school-based mentors contributes very effectively to their ability to support trainees during their school placements. Attendance at training sessions is very good and all training is supported by excellent documentation. Specific training for new mentors includes a rigorous verification programme that identifies strengths and areas that require further development. Well-structured mentor briefing and development sessions for all mentors focus on issues identified through the university's evaluation process. The focus in previous sessions on observation, feedback and target setting is evident in the very good quality of target setting for trainee improvement arising from lesson observation. In physical education, improvements in the training of school based mentors, through, for example, the development of cluster meetings, is leading to improvement in the quality and consistency of school-based training.

13. School coordinators effectively coordinate and monitor the school-based training provision by observing trainees teach, holding regular meetings with them and by liaising with school-based mentors to discuss trainees' progress. The partnership recognises the need to develop their quality assurance role and the introduction of formal feedback to schools on the quality of the training they provide is assisting this process.

14. Rigorous moderation procedures are in place to confirm the assessment of trainees against the Standards. This includes a robust second marking system for assignments and highly effective arrangements to moderate the assessment of trainees' teaching. Cross-school moderation by mentors, known as teacher moderators, is an example of excellent practice. Robust 'at risk of failure' procedures are in place, which ensure that those trainees who are of concern are identified quickly and given appropriately structured support and targets.

15. Excellent and comprehensive systems for evaluating the quality of central and school-based provision are in place. These include questionnaires completed at the end of each school placement by trainees, school-based mentors, school coordinators and university based tutors. This enables the partnership to get a clear view of the school-based training from different perspectives. Evaluation of this information results in a cycle of formal feedback to schools on their provision, which is leading to significant improvement in the training in schools.

16. The rigorous audit of provision against the formal requirements for ITT result in systems, processes and procedures that go far beyond the minimum requirements. The very thorough system of self-evaluation, through regular annual reviews at

subject and whole-programme level, and the highly effective benchmarking procedures result in clear action planning and continual improvement.