

Canterbury Christ Church University

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A primary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

Canterbury Christ Church University works in partnership with around 667 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers an undergraduate programme (BA Hons) as a three-year full-time course and as a two-year progression course, also full-time, building on a foundation degree. In addition there is a PGCE that may be taken full-time, part-time or as a modular flexible programme. At the time of the inspection there were 1136 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 rich and varied content of the different programmes
- the excellent way in which the programmes meet trainees' individual needs and aspirations
- the very effective partnership with schools
- the high quality of training provided in both the university and school placements
- the strong cohesion of programmes, linking theory and practice very well
- the very rigorous and fair recruitment procedures that result in high calibre trainees being selected
- the effective systems for ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear and discharged very well
- the thorough monitoring strategies that enable the partnership to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement very accurately.

Point for consideration

- ensuring that aspects of planning for improvement are evaluated against expected outcomes for trainees.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training has been at least maintained since the last inspection and has several very strong features. The university is successful in its aim of producing well trained, imaginative teachers, capable of high quality critical thinking. All partners have a strong commitment to personalised learning, intellectual rigour and educational excellence.

2. There is a high level of consistency in the quality, content and structure of the various programmes; all programmes are exceptionally well planned and meet the Requirements very well. They provide trainees with an excellent range of experiences, knowledge and understanding. The strong focus on developing independent learning and critical evaluation very effectively meets the needs of the trainees. Careful planning of central training modules, school placements and well designed assignments ensure that theory and practice are explicitly linked and developed. The trainees' experiences are enriched by the many opportunities offered through the university's modern foreign languages programme, international links, and its involvement in innovative national and regional projects.

3. The aspirations and individual needs of trainees are met outstandingly well. The university analyses audit, placement and assignment information very well and is flexible enough to respond quickly to any apparent areas of weakness, for example by providing additional individual support and group workshops, by re-sequencing modules or by changing the timing of placements. The courses are designed to provide a high degree of intellectual challenge, which ensures that more able trainees have opportunities to extend their learning. Varied and often innovative assignments cater for a range of learning styles and provide excellent opportunities for trainees to develop and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Trainees value the research element of the course and are able to make informed, intelligent choices leading to high quality research assignments. Trainees are regarded as developing fellow professionals and they respond well to high expectations, for example by successfully leading inclusion workshops as part of an annual conference.

4. Trainees' progress is monitored exceptionally well by the university and school mentors. Assignments are exceptionally well marked. Tutors provide excellent feedback and tailor pre- and post-assignment support according to individual and group needs. Link tutors and school mentors provide very good individualised support and guidance. Sharply focused targets and well implemented review procedures ensure that progress in achieving the Standards is well tracked and documented. Trainees are fully involved in evaluating their own progress. Professional development journals provide very good evidence of their capacity for high quality evaluation and personal reflection, as well as of their progress towards the Standards.

5. The quality of training is excellent, with very good account taken of national strategies, recent changes and the implications of *Every Child Matters*. Tutors are very well qualified and have a very strong commitment to their own professional development. They bring a very good range and depth of experience and expertise to the course. Training sessions are very positively evaluated by trainees, who have a high regard for the tutors and their passion for learning. Trainees are motivated by, and gain confidence from, the many opportunities to participate actively in the training and to rehearse learning activities before putting them into practice in school. Trainees are given good opportunities to observe and teach pupils across the range of abilities and throughout the age range. As a result of the training, they adopt varied and interesting teaching strategies and develop a very good understanding of pupils' learning and the wider professional role of the teacher.

6. Most tutors teach across professional, core and foundation subjects and, therefore, have a good understanding of the course as a whole. Themes covered in professional studies are extended through work in subject courses; for example, inclusion and assessment feature strongly in school and subject training. University tutors also fulfil the role of link tutor and have developed valuable relationships with mentors. Tasks and assignments provide high intellectual challenge and are rooted in classroom practice. They help to establish a clear link between taught sessions and practical teaching. These strengths, allied to effective systems of communication, moderation and evaluation result in high levels of consistency and cohesion.

Management and quality assurance

7. This large partnership is managed very effectively by tutors and mentors who have a close knowledge of individual trainees and their needs. This excellent relationship begins at the recruitment and selection stages, where the potential of prospective trainees to teach well is assessed rigorously. The university works very well with school-based staff to select trainees from a wide range of backgrounds. Careful analysis of strengths and weaknesses take place through, for example, the group presentation exercise or the task of writing about candidates' experiences of excellent teachers. The variety of full- and part-time courses, including an innovative, flexible postgraduate option, enables a diverse range of trainees to embark on a teaching course and to be successful. While the proportions of male and minority ethnic trainees are a little lower than average, the university is far from complacent and is engaged in creative strategies for increasing applicants from these under-represented groups. Identity and criminal record checks are carried out assiduously.

8. The university has very successfully built up a partnership with schools and local authorities that is not only extensive in number and geography, but also of very good quality. As a result, trainees are provided with school-based training environments that are very effective in building their teaching skills and their knowledge of the wider professional role of a teacher. Through opportunities such

as the area partnership meetings, link tutors and area moderators keep in touch with mentors on a local basis, share good practice and engage in dialogue on practical issues; for instance, how to meet the needs of very able trainees while on placement. Steering groups ensure that staff from partnership schools advise and work with tutors on helping to refine courses in the light of feedback from trainees and tutors, for example in strengthening the place of *Every Child Matters* in university-based training.

9. Excellent systems ensure that tutors and mentors understand their respective roles and responsibilities. Careful induction and support for new tutors help them to provide trainees with subject and professional studies sessions that are rated highly. Very effective peer review makes a major contribution to the development of tutors' skills and leads to innovative practice. In the very small number of cases where university-based provision falls short of the high expectations of trainees, senior tutors are quick to respond to provide additional support and mentoring. Training for school-based mentors is of high quality because it is relevant, rooted in practical experience and enables new mentors to understand how best to support trainees. It is complemented by helpful 'top-up' training at area partnership meetings, and advanced training for those who want to hone their mentoring skills still further. Placement documents and associated support materials, such as subject handbooks, are of high quality and make a major contribution to trainers' understanding of roles and responsibilities, as does the university's virtual learning environment.

10. The systems to monitor and evaluate provision are first-rate. They are very thorough and enable the partnership to have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Trainees have regular opportunities to give their views on the quality of placements and the effectiveness of university-based provision. This information, complemented by that from the staff-student liaison committee, internal evaluations, external examiners and from school-based staff, is used very well to complete annual appraisals of each undergraduate and postgraduate programme. Benchmarking data, such as retention, qualification and employment rates are used very well to check how the university compares with other teacher training providers. At present, the summaries of these evaluations are not shared formally with schools in order to inform the whole partnership how well it is doing.

11. Systems for moderating assessments of trainees' assignments and practical teaching are thorough. As a result, the judgements made on trainees' progress are accurate and consistent. A significant proportion of assignments is second marked, adding to already first-rate feedback to trainees. Link tutors support mentors' assessments of trainees' teaching through regular visits to schools, checking trainees' files and jointly observing trainees with mentors. Area moderators and external examiners complement these systems and ensure consistency of assessment across the partnership.

12. As a result of formal and detailed evaluations, each core subject and each programme create plans for improvement. These are very well structured and ensure that each identified weakness is tackled, thereby improving provision for trainees and providing senior managers with the means to track developments.

However, few of the priorities for improvement are evaluated against expected outcomes for trainees. Nevertheless, there is a very strong commitment to improvement. At the last inspection, provision was found to be of high quality; this has been maintained and built upon very successfully.