

York St John University

Lord Mayor's Walk
York
YO31 7EX

A primary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
James Kilner HMI

© Crown copyright 2007. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date are stated.
Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Introduction

York St John University works in partnership with 400 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a four year undergraduate course leading to BA/BSc (Hons) QTS; a one year full time postgraduate course, a part-time post graduate course and a flexi part time course. At the time of the inspection there were 754 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 academic tutorial system
- the attention paid to developing trainees' subject knowledge from the outset
- the focus on *Every Child Matters*, diversity and global dimensions to education
- training in settings other than schools
- the pilot cluster partnership
- the effective linking of school-based tasks with the content of centre-based training.

Points for consideration

- ensuring monitoring, evaluation and action planning is more sharply focused on outcomes for trainees
- gain greater consistency in the marking of assignments and the quality of feedback on teaching and learning from centre-based tutors and school mentors
- strengthening the partnership agreement so that schools are clear about the selection and de-selection criteria.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is at least good. Since the last inspection, the provision has been strengthened through closer links between professional and subject studies, the sharing of effective practice across all four programmes and challenging initiatives in response to changes in primary education. Trainees are prepared well to meet the Standards, to teach their chosen age range and to be reflective practitioners. Their positive attitude and enthusiasm for teaching reflect the strong ethos of support and encouragement in the centre and the partnership.

2. The good developmental structure and up-to-date content of the training programmes ensure that trainees have the knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver the National Curriculum. Trainees who opt to teach children aged 3-7 gain a good grounding in the Foundation Stage curriculum; undergraduate trainees in the third year have the opportunity to take an additional early years module with visits to nurseries.

3. Two key strengths of the programmes are the dual focus on the child and the trainee as learners, and the effective linking of school-based tasks with the content of centre-based training. On serial days in schools, trainees work with pupils. They gather information which becomes the focus of evaluation and discussion back at the centre and which feeds into assignments and prepares trainees for their placements. In this way, school and centre-based training is cohesive and mutually supportive. A good example is the first taught module in professional studies which is common to all four programmes. This gives trainees a sound introduction to child development from birth, theories of learning, and the concepts of diversity and creativity.

4. In English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), a strong emphasis is given to the development of the trainees' own subject knowledge, what they need to teach, how to teach it and how to assess pupils' progress. Trainees are encouraged to see things from a pupil's viewpoint and to appreciate misconceptions, particularly in mathematics and science. Different types of assignment, including group presentations, planning units of work, and the compilation of portfolios, prompt the application of skills and knowledge. However, there are inconsistencies in marking procedures. While some trainees receive detailed, high quality feedback, others are given little to indicate how well they have met the criteria and how to lift their performance.

5. Centre-based trainers use a wide range of training approaches; trainees' evaluations show that the training inspires them to try things in the classroom. Session outlines are usually very detailed, linked to the Standards and incorporate related tasks for trainees to carry out independently. Trainers model good use of ICT, especially in presentations. Recently appointed trainers have brought fresh ideas and good, practical knowledge of elements such as assessment for learning.

6. A good initiative has been the introduction of experience for undergraduates in settings other than schools, such as museums, country houses and art galleries. Trainees' organisation of sessions for visiting pupils has heightened the emphasis on the Standards related to professional values and practice. Similarly, productive links with the local authority, other agencies and the Centre for Global Education, based at the university, ensure that all trainees are well trained in diversity and inclusion.

7. Training in schools is of good quality. Mentors and class teachers know what is expected of them; handbooks give clear guidance and the training for mentors focuses on how to monitor and judge the trainees' progress. Mentors often go to some lengths to support trainees. The arrangement to complete the third and the final experience in the same school enables trainees to perceive themselves as a true part of the school community. Trainees receive good quality feedback on their overall teaching, particularly related to their management of the class. Recorded feedback is less frequent on the pupils' learning and how well the trainee taught the subject. While some targets for improvement relate to specific aspects of the Standards, others are too general. Resources are readily available on the campus for both academic study and to support learning in school. Trainees have the added advantage of membership of the neighbouring university's library.

8. Procedures are robust to track trainees' progress in meeting the Standards. Trainees' academic and professional progress are regularly and rigorously monitored and reviewed. The system of academic tutoring is strong; tutors liaise, guide and support and are well placed to advise trainees on the completion of their career entry profile. In schools, the system of joint appraisals between mentors and link tutors, and the meeting of mentor, link tutor and trainee at the end of a placement, ensures rigour in decisions about the quality of trainees' teaching and the Standards met.

Management and quality assurance

9. Management and quality assurance has improved since the last inspection due to the rigour with which the provider has instigated new leadership in key areas. This has led to successful appointments, changes in working practices and improved systems.

10. The post graduate and the undergraduate course recruit well qualified and motivated candidates. The university has been successful in recruiting and retaining trainees from black and minority ethnic communities and has exceeded its target this year. The prospectus and web site indicate clearly the course requirements and route options. Prospective applicants are given helpful advice at open days and by the admissions department. Partnership schools are actively involved in the selection process and are well prepared for this task. The university is effective at meeting academic and pastoral needs of trainees; retention rates and final grades are good. Support for trainees with disabilities is very good. Adaptations are made to ensure full inclusion and accessibility both in the university and in placement

schools. Constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates enables them to re-apply successfully at a later date. Despite the University's best efforts, it has been unable to achieve the BME targets set.

11. Arrangements for the partnership are good. The university is successful in engaging the support of schools from a diversity of settings and phases. Individual partnership agreements are negotiated with link tutors; however overarching roles and responsibilities for all involved in the partnership are less well developed. Equally the criteria for selection and de-selection of schools is not apparent within these individual agreements. The university is currently reviewing its partnership arrangements and agreements prior to the start of the new undergraduate and post graduate course for September 2007.

12. A pilot cluster partnership model has begun. It involves neighbouring schools working closely as training schools with leading mentors and an initial teacher training coordinator from the lead school working closely with university-based staff. This has been successful in enabling trainees to observe good practice in a number of schools within close proximity. It has also involved cross-school moderation and is enhancing the school based training opportunities for the trainees. A thorough evaluation is being conducted and already there are plans to develop this model in further geographical areas of the partnership.

13. Regular information updates and good quality documentation are provided to schools. Following consultation, the partnership has produced a very useful school experience toolkit. This clearly sets out the timescales and range of activities to be completed on placement. A termly newsletter keeps schools well informed and cluster meetings are well attended. The university's high quality virtual learning environment contains all the documentation and information pertaining to the course and placements. It is well used by trainees and increasingly so by schools. The partnership steering group and partnership development managers work closely together to ensure that good quality placements are available.

14. Placements are evaluated by trainees, schools and link tutors. Information gathered identifies good practice for future reference as well as any weaknesses to be remedied. The recent appointment of administrative support for the partnership development managers demonstrates an efficient use of time and resources. Plans are in place for the accreditation of mentor training which offers the opportunity to further develop the quality of school- based training.

15. Trainers are clear about their roles and have a wide range of experience of primary and early years education. Induction procedures provide support and training for colleagues new to the faculty. All are committed to promoting the development of high quality professionals. Confident trainees are enabled to gain an understanding of their potential leadership role in school.

16. Provision is regularly reviewed in the light of trainees' feedback. Consequently, trainees feel that their voices are heard and that tutors will act upon their representations to those who manage the programme. Departmental and

programme meetings shape the future development of the course. In the mathematics department, this is robust and backed up by clear strategic planning and evaluations. In some instances, however, meetings can be informal, professional conversations rather than a formal system of review and action planning.

17. The monitoring of programme delivery, together with aspects of centre and school based training are good. Moderation procedures are well established and serve to inform course development and provision for trainees. A well written and helpful external examiner's report, closely linked to the last inspection report, has been used as a basis to further develop the course provision.

18. Subject leaders collate evaluation data effectively in order to gain a clear idea of issues raised by trainees through their work in school. Evaluations are sought from both trainees and mentors. These identify areas for improvement which leads to change. The university conducts a thorough statistical analysis of its performance and compares this with that of similar providers. It takes appropriate and determined action where any emerging patterns are identified.