

University of Portsmouth

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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report

2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Portsmouth works in partnership with 110 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers business education, English, geography, maths, modern foreign languages and science. At the time of the inspection there were 108 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 revised report combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and quality assurance arrangements in 2006/07, 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

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade: 1

Key strengths

- the strong leadership and management at programme and subject level which promote a coherent, high quality approach and a drive for innovation and improvement
- the very effective systems for identifying and addressing trainees' individual needs both in centre- and school-based training
- the good support for trainees whose first language is not English or who come from minority ethnic backgrounds
- the rigorous systems for monitoring trainees' progress against the Standards
- the strong partnership and the quality of the schools as training venues
- the clarity of the documentation defining schools' roles in the partnership and its very good organisation
- the monitoring of all elements of the work which ensures a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses.

Points for consideration

- encouraging all trainees to focus more consistently on pupils' learning when they evaluate their lessons.

The quality of training

1. The partnership provides high quality, coherent training which is, overall, outstanding. The commitment of schools to their training role is very strong and is well supported by high quality documentation, very good communication and support, and consistently applied monitoring systems. The university and schools are particularly successful in working together to meet trainees' individual needs. Partnership schools provide suitable venues for training and the placements are well planned so that trainees have a good breadth of experience across different types of schools.

2. Training programmes are very well designed to provide opportunities for trainees to meet the Standards; they are up to date and relevant and the level of coherence between all elements of the training is very high. University professional studies sessions are complemented by useful cross-subject seminars and these topics are then systematically followed up by course tutors in subject specific training programmes. Theory and practice are carefully integrated: there are highly appropriate school based tasks which encourage trainees to draw on their academic work in the university to improve the quality of their work in the classroom. Trainees demonstrate an impressive understanding of how the different elements of the programme combine.

3. University based training is of a high quality, with a varied and stimulating range of resources and activities. Subject sessions are lively, interactive and well planned. Visiting specialists, for example in English, are used to very good effect to enhance the quality of the training. Subject mentors are knowledgeable and committed and provide trainees with first rate role models.

4. Some aspects of the course are extremely innovative. For example, all subjects offer enrichment days to gifted and talented pupils from local schools. Trainees are responsible for planning and teaching these sessions and this enhances their understanding in this area. Training in lesson planning is generally strong, particularly in modern foreign languages, business education and geography. There are examples of exemplary planning by trainees: for example, for the deployment of teaching assistants or to manage transitions between distinct phase of lessons. The university provides very useful templates for trainees to plan and to evaluate their lessons. However, not all trainees consistently evaluate how pupils have learned when they reflect on their teaching.

5. The course is particularly successful in meeting trainees' individual needs. Pre-course guidance and individual tasks ensure that trainees are well prepared for the training. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Subject knowledge audits are completed at interview and are regularly reviewed by university tutors. Subject knowledge development is skilfully integrated within university training sessions. In schools, subject mentors provide trainees with very good support to tackle any gaps in their own subject knowledge as well as developing their understanding of how to teach those aspects.

6. There are particularly good arrangements to support trainees whose first language is not English, who come from minority ethnic backgrounds or who may be unfamiliar with the English educational system. The modern foreign languages course leader has worked with the university support services to devise a dedicated course to develop trainees' written and spoken English. A local teacher-consultant from a minority ethnic background contributes to this course and provides trainees with valuable additional support.

7. Systems to monitor trainees' progress towards the Standards are very good and these are implemented consistently well by university and school-based trainers. Trainees' teaching is observed frequently throughout the course. They receive regular written feedback which includes perceptive comments which help trainees to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. The targets arising from lesson observations are appropriate for the various stages of the course and become progressively more challenging. Weekly mentor meetings provide valuable opportunities for trainees to discuss their overall progress: targets are set and reviewed regularly. High quality feedback on written assignments often draws useful links between theory and practice and provides constructive guidance on what trainees need to do to improve their work. The reports completed at the end of each phase clearly identify trainees' strengths and areas for development. They are used very well to identify subsequent training priorities. The university is introducing a well conceived system for tracking trainees' progress at each phase against comprehensive performance criteria and this is already being used to good effect in geography, science and modern foreign languages. Internal and external moderation arrangements are rigorous and effective, with good use of joint observations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of judgements about the quality of teaching.

Management and quality assurance

8. Selection procedures have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now very effective in allowing course tutors to make better informed judgements about potential trainees. Consequently, the provider is recruiting strong cohorts of trainees who are well qualified, articulate and show commitment and enthusiasm. Schools are very well involved in the interviewing process and the quality of the interviews is monitored by the associate head of school as part of the programme's quality assurance procedures. The recruitment of trainees from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is strong overall. Withdrawals from the course have dropped considerably and steadily over the last three years. As a result of improved procedures, better focused marketing and a good range of subject booster and enhancement courses, trainees have become better prepared for the rigours of the course.

9. The management and leadership of the secondary provision as a whole and of the individual subjects are very effective and ensure that the quality of the training remains high. The associate head of school is well supported by enthusiastic,

committed and self critical course leaders who are proactive in developing the course. A number of them have made improvements which have increased the level of trainees' and mentors' understanding of exactly how they might progress. Some trainees use new pen portraits which have been devised to help them to track their progress, to set themselves additional targets for improvement. The induction of two new course leaders into this relatively small provision has been extremely well managed and has guaranteed continued good quality training in these subjects. Staff are well qualified and their continuing professional development is well coordinated.

10. There is a very strong partnership. Schools show commitment to the provider and are able to fulfil their role effectively because of the high quality documentation and organisation. There is good representation on the programme board and schools are well involved annually in reviewing all areas of the programme.

11. Training for subject mentors has been much improved in the recent past as has the rigour with which mentoring has been monitored. Mentor meetings have a significant element of training. There has been an innovative use of cross-subject work to add breadth to the training and those subject and professional mentors who are unable to attend meetings receive excellent one to one in-school support. All school-based trainers are therefore very well prepared for their roles and responsibilities, and carry them out very well. Mentors embrace their developmental role, particularly with regard to subject knowledge, very well. Many schools see the development of mentoring skills as a key element of the continuing professional development programme of their teaching staff.

12. The partnership ensures the schools are good venues for training. The partnership manager's visits play a critical role in making sure that schools are aware of each trainee's training entitlement. This process is also used effectively to identify any additional training needs for school-based trainers and as such is well received by schools.

13. Improvements to the systems of monitoring and assuring the quality of provision which were noted at the time of the last inspection are now having a real impact. There is a comprehensive range of methods for monitoring the provision as a whole. The associate head of school monitors a selection of interviews to ensure a consistency of process and to secure a common approach to judgements. He also observes central subject teaching and provides valuable feedback which has been well received by course leaders and tutors. School-based training is monitored very effectively. Course leaders carry out joint lesson observations in each phase and provide joint feedback to the trainees. This serves both to moderate judgements and to assure the quality of feedback given by school-based trainers. In addition, mentor training sessions are monitored and their quality is evaluated in each subject. There are explicit criteria determining which schools are to be monitored. The feedback given to subject mentors by course leaders is honest and constructive and is acted on well by the mentors to improve the quality of their training.

14. There is a strong ethos of continuing improvement. The provider regularly evaluates all elements of the provision and responds quickly to trainees' evaluations. The evaluation of the changes introduced into this year's induction phase, for example, was positive. There was no complacency, however, and points for development were noted to improve this phase even further. There is overall, a very good analysis of the large range of qualitative and quantitative data available and, as a result, the provider has a detailed picture of what needs to be improved and a clear idea of how this will be done.

15. The self-evaluation process is managed via a very well constructed self-evaluation form where the headings encourage focused analysis at management and subject level. In practice, the outcomes are more variable than the good guidance might suggest they would be. The best are exemplary: they take into account a range of evidence, are evaluative and result in areas for improvement which feed well into the action plan. Self-evaluation forms and action plans which are less effective use a narrower range of evidence. However they have benefited from the good practice of the best and are showing recent good improvement. Overall, these action plans result in significant improvements that are being made on the ground.