

Suffolk and Norfolk Primary SCITT

Suffolk and Norfolk Primary SCITT
Adelphi House
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A primary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Suffolk and Norfolk Primary SCITT works in partnership with 75 schools in Norfolk and Suffolk. It provides a one-year primary initial teacher training course which leads to a professional graduate certificate in education. At the time of the inspection there were 50 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: 3

There is insufficient evidence that the overall quality is at least good. The provider will receive a full inspection next year.

Key strengths

- the well structured centre-based training programme
- the identification of and support for developing trainees' individual subject knowledge
- the rigorous selection procedures
- the clear vision and direction established by the new programme manager and assistant programme managers
- improved communication across the consortium and between the regions

Points for action

- reviewing procedures for allocating trainees to placements so that they have good experience of teaching across the full age range for which they are being trained
- ensuring that the outstanding three points for consideration from the last inspection report are addressed
- improving the quality and consistency of mentor support
- improving the quality of training in information communication technology
- improving the rigour of quality assurance procedures

The quality of training

1. The centre-based training programme is well structured and planned to provide trainees with a secure theoretical grounding of best practice in teaching and learning across their chosen age range. The course also enables primary trainees to develop a good awareness of provision in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 3, and early years trainees to gain a good awareness of Key Stage 2.

2. Modules are clearly referenced to the Standards and good account is taken of the National Curriculum, the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the Primary National Strategy. There is good cohesion between the taught modules. For example, good links are made between elements of professional studies, the specialist modules and the core subjects in areas such as planning, assessment and inclusion. However, training in information communication technology (ICT) is less secure than in other subjects because it is too narrowly focused on developing trainees' personal skills instead of on how children can use ICT to support their learning.

3. Centre-based training is delivered by a team of well-qualified tutors, including practising teachers with recent and relevant teaching experience. Sessions are well planned and tutors model good primary practice. Trainees are enthused and motivated by their involvement in the activities, and they develop useful resource banks to support their teaching.

4. The amount of time trainees spend in school is generous and potentially provides good opportunities for trainees to put theory into practice. However, trainees have restricted opportunities to gain substantial experience of working across the full age-range for which they are being trained. Most trainees have placements in only two different classes, frequently with very similar age groups. Very few primary trainees are placed in Year 5 or Year 6 and most early years trainees do not have sustained experience in a nursery class. As a result, they have limited opportunities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding, and to gain confidence in teaching the full age and ability range.

5. The good quality of the centre-based training, identified at the time of the last inspection, has been maintained. The identification of and support for developing trainees' individual subject knowledge in centre-based training sessions is a strength of the course. The recent introduction of open sessions as part of the professional studies module is particularly effective in addressing specific needs arising during the training. However, the good attention paid to developing trainees' subject knowledge in centre-based training sessions is not replicated in schools. The quality of written feedback on trainees' teaching is variable and too often provides insufficient focused advice on how to develop their practice further. Subject-specific guidance is rarely provided by mentors. Lesson observation forms are not well constructed; the format makes no provision for focused subject feedback. In contrast, the professional practice reports which are completed at the end of each school experience are of good quality. They include very helpful comments and

judgements on trainees' knowledge and teaching in the core subjects and ICT although the information is not disseminated to subject tutors. Consequently, subject tutors do not know how well the trainees are teaching in school.

6. A good range of incremental school-based tasks builds on taught theory and is used effectively to develop trainees' understanding of how children learn. These feed in logically to the well-planned assignments. Although there are clear assessment criteria which are referenced to the Standards, there are inconsistencies in the way they are marked, particularly in English and science. Marking is not always sufficiently helpful. Some, but not all, mark sheets include references to the Standards.

Management and quality assurance

7. The partnership recruits well qualified trainees and is constantly reviewing its selection procedures. The web site is comprehensive and includes detailed guidance on how to apply. A conscious effort is made to recruit trainees from under-represented groups, including taking roadshows to various venues. In the latest recruitment round, the partnership has been highly successful in recruiting men onto the training programme; ten will join the course in September 2007. Partnership schools are well represented on interviewing panels and the whole process is co-ordinated effectively by the programme leader. This year, it has been strengthened by the introduction of an interactive task where potential trainees' interpersonal skills are assessed. Careful records of the candidates' performance in the full range of tasks are maintained and used to inform the setting of pre-course tasks. Subject tutors are also informed of the trainees' performance at interview. They use the information wisely to tailor the training programme to meet individual needs at the outset.

8. Managing the partnership of schools over a wide geographical area presents challenges. Trainees are placed in a range of good schools including nursery and infant, first, junior and primary schools, in Suffolk and South Norfolk. However, while this diversity presents a good opportunity for trainees to experience teaching in schools in different contexts, opportunities are missed. The criteria for the selection of school placements are not robust enough. Records are maintained of the age-groups taught by trainees on each school placement but they are not used sufficiently to inform future placements.

9. There are strong links between the SCITT and Suffolk and Norfolk local authorities. The majority of the centre-based tutors work for a local authority as advisers and advisory teachers. Consequently, they benefit from the professional development opportunities provided by their main employer. However, there is scope for the partnership to offer further professional development opportunities which are tailored to their roles and responsibilities as SCITT trainers. The monitoring of centre-based training has recently begun and this is a good development.

10. The employment of advanced skills teachers is a further good initiative. While they do good work in planning differentiated mentor training for new and experienced mentors, there is further work to be done in improving mentors' skills of lesson observation and giving focused written feedback.

11. The core management team is new and is already demonstrating skills in making improvements. The programme director and assistant programme directors have worked hard to gain greater consistency in the quality of centre-based training between the northern and southern region. The same training is now delivered in both regions. Communication has also improved with the introduction of a mentor newsletter.

12. Training facilities for trainees in the southern region have improved with the move to new premises. Trainees have access to more practical resources and academic texts located in a resource room and library. Access to ICT resources has been problematic but plans are in place to improve provision.

13. There are good arrangements for the internal and external moderation of the trainees' teaching. Mentors in neighbouring schools observe each other's trainees teaching and the joint observations between school liaison tutors and mentors represent good practice in ensuring consistency of assessment. External examiners' reports are helpful and the SCITT responds to issues raised. For example, it has introduced measures to improve the consistency of the marking of English assignments.

14. The partnership's self evaluation document is very comprehensive but is over descriptive at the expense of sharp analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. The partnership encourages trainees and mentors to evaluate the quality of placements but, until very recently, evaluation forms have not been well constructed to help managers get precise measurable data in order to bring about improvements. There are no formal module evaluations for the core subjects. The end of placement reports incorporate useful judgements on the trainees' proficiency in teaching the core subjects and ICT but the information is not shared routinely with subject tutors. Despite the lack of robust formal evaluation, there is plenty of informal evaluation and evidence to prove that the management team consider and respond to comments and suggestions. For example, the training sessions on behaviour management have been timetabled earlier on in the training programme than in previous years. The programme managers are committed firmly to promoting a more systematic approach to quality assurance.

15. The last inspection report identified four points for consideration. The partnership has made good progress addressing the issue about improving promotional materials but it has not made sufficient progress in addressing the other three points: namely, providing more explicit guidance to schools to help them quality assure their training, the evaluation of centre-based training and improving subject development planning.

16. The programme manager and assistant programme managers are working well together as a team and providing clear direction. They demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing the outstanding issues highlighted above and are actively seeking to network with other SCITT providers in order to share good practice. The SCITT action plan identifies relevant priorities.