

# Shire Foundation

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Luton Learning Resources Centre  
Strangers Way  
Luton  
LU4 9ND

A primary initial teacher training  
full inspection report  
2006/07

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

The Shire Foundation works in partnership with 25 schools to provide a primary initial teacher training postgraduate certificate in education course for the 3-7 or 5-11 age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 23 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 full 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

Standards achieved by trainees:                      Grade: 2  
Quality of training:                                      Grade: 2  
Management and quality assurance:              Grade: 2

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Framework.

## Key strengths

- the commitment of the partnership schools, central team and the local authority to providing good teachers for Luton schools
- the quality assurance procedures that secure good training in schools and very good training in the centre
- the coherence of the course
- the care taken to allocate trainees to particular classes in schools so that they have every opportunity to make progress
- the excellent arrangements for monitoring trainees' progress
- the use made of information provided by former trainees to improve the course.

## Points for consideration

- making the targets for trainees more challenging and subject-specific
- using evaluations of the impact of the subject-specific training in development plans
- referencing all subject handbooks, assignments, tasks and rubrics to the Standards, so that trainees can see how they fit into the overall training plan.

## Standards achieved by trainees

1. Trainees have high expectations of themselves as well as their pupils. They are good role models and establish good working relationships. Many have a strong classroom presence to which pupils respond with ease and confidence. They work effectively with pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities or for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Outside the classroom trainees take part in activities such as staff training and meetings, and some run extracurricular activities for the children.
2. The trainees regularly and independently evaluate their own performance. They respond positively to the evaluation of more experienced colleagues and address targets which are set either by themselves or by their mentors. When these targets are challenging they respond well and make good progress. For example, one class teacher asked for more lively literacy lessons so the trainee included drama and musical activities. Those trainees who are not so good at self-evaluation, for example because they do not analyse the effect of their teaching on pupils' learning, respond swiftly to criticism. All trainees seek advice and are self-motivated to improve.
3. Trainees have good subject knowledge in the key stages for which they are being trained to teach, though a few find it more challenging when asked to teach older, more able pupils. All have a very good grasp of how to teach phonics and a good command of the Primary National Strategy. They are aware of gaps in their subject knowledge and willingly undertake thorough research to strengthen these.
4. Planning is very detailed, following the Shire Foundation preferred format. Learning outcomes, teaching objectives and success criteria are clearly defined. Trainees know their children well and plan effectively to differentiate their teaching and activities so that pupils' individual needs are met. The trainees take part in longer term planning for a year group, but some have limited experience of creating medium term plans. Most trainees assess pupils' full or partial achievement of learning objectives well, and those teaching in the Foundation Stage adapt this approach effectively for younger pupils.
5. The trainees listen closely to pupils' responses during lessons, intervening where necessary to ensure pupils make good progress. They use the 'talking partners' technique very well. Their use of the interactive white board is often creative. Above all, trainees make lessons as interesting as possible. Classrooms and pupils are well organised; trainees deal firmly with any misbehaviour, using a range of strategies to gain and maintain the attention of the class. Many use a rewards system efficiently to motivate pupils.
6. Trainees have a strong commitment to inclusion, working hard to include pupils of all ability levels in their lessons. They work closely with the class teacher and teaching assistants, for example in encouraging an autistic child to respond. They value the responses of all in their class, thus raising their pupils' self esteem.

## The quality of training

7. The course is very well structured and has appropriate content which ensures that trainees have every opportunity to meet the Standards. The order in which topics are covered is sensible and a good balance is struck between centre-based and school-based training. There is appropriate attention to the core and foundation subjects. While the course prepares trainees for either the 3-7 or 5-11 age ranges, in many training sessions tutors cover the three primary stages; this has a beneficial effect in preparing trainees for teaching.

8. The National Curriculum and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage are covered thoroughly, as are the literacy and numeracy strands of the Primary National Strategy. The principles of *Every Child Matters* permeate all sections of the course and are well understood by the trainees; the tutors' handbook contains a very helpful document which shows clearly how these principles relate to the Standards. In addition, the professional studies course tackles related topics such as child protection, special educational needs and the education of refugees. These topics are often delivered by very experienced local authority staff. Course content strikes a very good balance between improving trainees' subject knowledge and training to teach.

9. The core subject handbooks for English and mathematics show clearly how each training session refers to the Standards. Assignments and school-based tasks encourage a very good balance between theory and practice, though their rubrics do not make clear which of the Standards they address, nor do the feedback sheets for marked assignments.

10. The course has a very high level of coherence. The link between school-based and centre-based sessions is enhanced by the knowledge which mentor assessors have of the course content and the individual needs of the trainees. Links between the core subject and professional studies elements are good because tutors plan together and try to ensure that the sequencing of their sessions is complementary. Very good use is made in centre-based sessions of trainees' experiences and work in schools.

11. Centre-based training is very good. Trainers are highly qualified and have much relevant experience; for example, the mathematics and English tutors are local authority consultants in these subjects. Training sessions are planned well; they have clear objectives which are shared with the trainees. Sessions maintain a good pace, and achieve a good balance between the tutor's input and the trainees' participation. Tutors model primary practice very well and make excellent use of information and communications technology (ICT) such as interactive white boards and laptop computers. Trainees show high levels of interest and enthusiasm, and participate willingly in the wide variety of tasks which they are given.

12. School-based training is good. Mentors are experienced teachers who have been well trained and briefed for their role. Training sessions are planned well; they focus on practical issues which are relevant to the trainees' needs. Mentors have very good professional relationships with trainees and give good oral feedback after observing their teaching. However, the targets set as part of this process are not very challenging; for example, they are sometimes concerned with organisational matters and do not refer to subject-specific issues. This means that a minority of trainees do not achieve some of the Standards as well as they might. For example, one trainee with weaknesses in assessment and in planning made only limited progress in those areas.

13. A limited collection of resources is kept at the centre, but trainees have access to local authority resources on the same site. ICT resources are good. The resources available to trainees in their placement schools are very good and ensure that the trainees can put into practice what they learn on the course.

14. Arrangements to develop trainees' subject knowledge are good. Trainees complete core subject and ICT tests at interview. These are used very well in science to set pre-course tasks, though this is not done so well in the other core subjects. Core subject knowledge is audited at the beginning of the course. An outstanding feature is the thoroughness with which trainees' developing knowledge is tracked. For example, in English, they are asked to assess their own knowledge of the topic of each session both at its beginning and end. Trainees make good use of the provider's virtual learning environment to consult tutors about their concerns.

15. The systems for monitoring trainees' progress are excellent. A key feature in this is the quality of the mentor meetings which are held three times each term. These meetings are used not only for briefing and training but also to discuss and monitor the progress of trainees. Mentors and central trainers, therefore, have an unusually detailed knowledge of trainees' strengths and weaknesses. Trainees maintain continuous assessment files which most mentors monitor assiduously.

16. Trainees' assignments and school-based tasks are marked by course tutors and arrangements for second marking are suitable. Feedback on assignments and on school-based tasks is extensive and helpful. Arrangements for the assessment of trainees' teaching are very good and include joint observations to aid consistency. The final assessment of trainees is rigorous and accurate on the pass / fail borderline.

## Management and quality assurance

17. Selection procedures are good. The interview process has been modified and enhanced annually; for example, it now usefully requires candidates to read to a group of pupils. Standardised interview questions are designed well to assess the candidates' attributes such as their subject knowledge and their commitment. Because of the care taken with recruitment, retention and success rates are good.

Formal feedback about their interview performance helps unsuccessful candidates prepare for any future application.

18. Equal opportunities and race equality are high on the partnership's agenda. The number of trainees recruited from minority ethnic communities and other under-represented groups exceeds targets. Most are from the local area; many have had jobs as teaching assistants; and all are committed to teaching in Luton schools.

19. The management team places much importance on measuring the impact of actions; consequently, progress since the last inspection has been very good in a range of management and quality assurance functions. These functions are described in great detail in the partnership agreement. The partnership provides a reduced version or reference guide to the agreement which schools find very useful. Much work has gone in to helping schools understand the terms of reference of boards and committees. All of the partners are represented well through the various committees.

20. The management team is very responsive to the needs of the schools and, as a result, schools feel involved in the running of the partnership. The strength of the management model is reflected in the way that everyone understands their roles in the training and assessment process. Mentor meetings are well attended. Mentor training is a key strength of the partnership; it brings coherence to the trainees' training experiences and to their assessment. External moderator days are used well to monitor the work of mentors and to make sure it is of good quality.

21. The procedures for ensuring coherent, consistent and effective planning and training across the course programme are much improved. The course development committee meets termly and there are good examples of core-subject tutors meeting with school-based mentors. The quality assurance mentor provides a good link between the centre-based tutors and schools. This means mentors are aware of important aspects of the central training in English and mathematics.

22. The schools in the consortium are very good venues for training. Classes are carefully allocated to trainees so they have every opportunity to develop as effective teachers. The partnership professional leadership team monitors this carefully and insists that schools meet the 'criteria for outstanding provision.' This year, three schools were deselected for sound reasons: this was carried out with little disruption for the trainees. In order to improve training further the partnership has issued a document that sets out grade criteria for an effective ITT school. This helps schools assess themselves and identify targets for improving the quality of the training they provide.

23. Assessment of the trainees' teaching is moderated effectively in the schools by mentors, mentor assessors, headteachers and often by subject coordinators. Moderation of assessment judgements across schools is carried out by mentor assessors, together with the external moderator and the quality assurance mentor. This system works well and ensures that assessment at all stages of the course is rigorous and accurate.



24. The arrangements for monitoring the training programme are very good. Trainees evaluate the quality of centre-based training and school experiences, and the key points are fed back to schools. Headteachers, mentors and class teachers meet in school to evaluate the training programme against clear criteria.

25. Managers take good account of evaluations when planning for improvement, but action plans do not consider an evaluation of the impact of subject training. The annual general meeting discusses trainees' evaluations of the training programme and identifies areas for development. The national NQT survey is used as a basis for this and provides the partnership with a system for benchmarking its provision. The partnership is not complacent and is setting targets in some of the areas that are good but could be outstanding.

26. In addition, the partnership director correlates interview performance against achievement at the end of the course and follows up carefully any trainee judged to be only satisfactory in order to identify any implications for the training programme.