

# Northampton Teacher Training Partnership

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Northampton School for Boys  
Billing Road  
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A secondary initial teacher training  
full inspection report  
2006/07

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

The Northampton Teacher Training Partnership is a school-centred initial teacher training consortium that works in partnership with 11 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training courses for the 11 – 16 age range in design and technology, English, mathematics and science. It offers both qualified teacher status and postgraduate certificate in education courses, the latter validated by the University of Leicester. At the time of the inspection there were 17 trainees on the course.

## 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: 3  
Management and quality assurance:              Grade: 3

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

## Key strengths

- trainees' enthusiasm for teaching, their high expectations and their commitment to raising the achievement of their pupils
- trainees' effective use of a wide range of teaching strategies and the positive and productive learning environments they create
- rigorous selection procedures, which ensure that highly suitable trainees are recruited
- the pivotal role of administrative support within the partnership

## Points for action

- ensuring that lead subject mentors have sufficient time to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively
- developing trainers' ability to set precise and challenging targets for trainees.

## Points for consideration

- developing the effectiveness of training for school-based tutors
- improving the coherence between the different components of the training
- developing trainees' broader understanding of the place of their subject within the curriculum and the alternative approaches to its pedagogy
- improving the training in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) so that it challenges all trainees and meets their individual needs.

## Standards achieved by trainees

1. Trainees are enthusiastic about teaching and are committed to raising the achievement of their pupils. They play a strong part in the life of their schools, by, for example, acting as form tutors, attending residential trips and running extracurricular after-school clubs. Their contribution and skills are highly regarded by their placement schools. This is reflected in the fact that at the time of the inspection, in June, all trainees had obtained permanent teaching positions, most of them in local partnership schools.
2. Most trainees reflect well on what their pupils have learned, how effectively their teaching has contributed to this and what they might do to improve pupils' learning further. However, a minority reflect more on the impact of their teaching on pupils' behaviour than on their learning.
3. Trainees' subject knowledge is confident and up to date. This enables them to teach challenging concepts in a way that makes it easy for pupils to understand. Trainees show good awareness of national strategies and of post-16 provision. However, for a minority of trainees, their knowledge of transition issues from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is less secure.
4. Trainees engage in good planning that includes clear learning objectives, a varied range of appropriate activities and well chosen resources. They make good use of formative assessment and many have good experience of monitoring, assessment and recording of pupils' achievements.
5. Trainees plan lessons that match the range of pupils' attainment. They are aware of the issues involved in supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language and have gained valuable experience of this in at least one of their school placements. Trainees recognise the importance of differentiation and how it can improve their teaching. However, a minority of trainees have little awareness of the impact of their teaching on the learning of different groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are gifted and talented.
6. Trainees use a wide range of well chosen teaching strategies. For example, good questioning techniques were observed in a mathematics lesson and good use of scaffolding was evident in an English lesson. In design and technology and in science, trainees organise and manage their classes well in relation to health and safety issues. Trainees establish good relationships with their pupils. They have high expectations of their behaviour and create positive and productive learning environments.
7. Trainees demonstrate good use of ICT in their preparation of teaching resources. They are confident and selective in their use of ICT as a teaching tool and make good use of it in monitoring and recording pupils' progress.

## The quality of training

8. The structure and content of the training programme meet the Requirements. Block placements in two contrasting secondary schools ensure that trainees gain good experience of different cultures and approaches to teaching and learning, and a balance of experience in teaching across the age and ability range. The timing of the first placement, which now provides trainees with an earlier opportunity to take responsibility for teaching, is a significant improvement. However, the structure of the primary placement does not allow all trainees to gain a good understanding of transition issues from Key Stage 2 to 3.

9. The quality of the centre-based general professional studies training is a strength of the provision and includes an excellent programme with contributions from partnership schools and external organisations such as the local authority advisory service. The professional studies module provided by the University of Leicester is satisfactory and provides a theoretical approach that complements the centre-based provision, which is more practical.

10. Central subject training has a strong practical focus with tutors consistently modelling good practice. Trainees value this because it equips them with a breadth of ideas, approaches and resources to explore in their own lessons, as well as improving their subject knowledge. However, subject sessions rarely look at the broader issues surrounding the place of their subject within the curriculum and the alternative approaches to pedagogy in the subject. ICT training lacks challenge for the many trainees who join the course with extensive ICT skills and experience.

11. Training by school-based tutors provides good practical grounding for trainees in teaching their subject. The frequency and variety of both formal written feedback and oral feedback is a strong feature of this training; however, the lack of consistent, precise target setting linked to the Standards reduces the effectiveness of this. The role of the professional tutor is limited to a pastoral, support and induction function. The quality of support provided by professional tutors varies considerably between schools but where it is most effective it contributes to the trainees' familiarity with the distinctive features of the school and to their progress.

12. The individual components of the training programme are strong but they are not well integrated. For example, the extent to which school-based tutors make reference to issues raised in professional studies or in central subject training varies; although some connections with professional studies issues are made in central subject sessions, for example on assessment and learning styles, this is not done routinely.

13. The partnership responds to trainees' individual needs, identifying their prior experience, relevant knowledge and understanding, and ensuring they have every opportunity to achieve the Standards. Where trainees show weaknesses, additional guidance and direction are forthcoming. This is a good feature throughout the

course. There is good support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities; for example trainees with dyslexia and dyscalculia have been directed to specialist support. The allocation of trainees to their second placement takes very good account of progress made during their first placement, their experience, class management skills and subject expertise.

14. Comprehensive monitoring processes are in place to check trainees' progress. For example, minutes of all meetings and lesson observations are submitted to the provider regularly, trainees' files are checked frequently, and the programme manager and lead subject mentors visit all trainees to observe them teach at least once in each placement.

15. Assessment procedures are clear and well understood by all involved. End-of-placement reports indicate that school-based tutors understand the Standards and make sound judgements as to whether trainees have achieved them. Assignments are rigorously marked and the assessment of trainees at the pass/fail boundary and in the rank ordering of trainees' achievement against the Standards is secure.

## Management and quality assurance

16. The partnership has a comprehensive and rigorous selection process. Great care is taken to ensure that the range of selection activities provides candidates with every opportunity to demonstrate their potential, and that the treatment of candidates is consistent and fair. Equal opportunities and race equality policies are effective and the outcomes of the selection process reflect this; recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups and other underrepresented groups exceeds targets.

17. Trainees are well prepared for the course. They are required to engage in a variety of general and subject-specific development activities. Those who are identified as having specific subject weaknesses are required to complete additional work or, in design and technology and in science, to attend subject booster courses. The care given to recruitment and selection and the preparation for the course mean that withdrawal from the course is rare, and that those recruited are committed to teaching and have the potential to demonstrate good achievement of the Standards.

18. Highly committed management of the programme has resulted in significant improvements since the last inspection, including the introduction of systems and procedures to improve the quality and consistency of training between schools and between subjects. Management of the programme is very ably assisted by administrative support that makes a very significant contribution to the good recruitment and selection process and to the effective communication and liaison with partner schools and with trainees.

19. The role and responsibilities of lead subject mentors are clearly stated and understood. However, those holding this key role, all of whom are middle or senior

leaders in their schools, do not have any protected time to carry out these responsibilities. Thus, although lead subject mentors are able, with administrative help, to monitor the extent to which trainees receive the minimum entitlement to support and feedback in schools, they are not monitoring the quality of this entitlement effectively. This is evident in their failure to identify weaknesses in target setting and general issues of coherence across the training. It also means they have limited ability to support new school-based tutors. This lack of time is a major barrier to improvement for the partnership, compromises the quality of the provision, and has the potential to inhibit the progress made by trainees.

20. There is good written and electronic guidance for school-based tutors on how to support trainees in their teaching and how to provide evidence of their meeting the Standards. However, the emphasis of training school-based tutors in the past has been on systems and procedures rather than on identified improvement issues. Opportunities to share the good practice that is evident in the partnership are not always exploited for training purposes. For example, the very good lesson observation feedback notes by the programme manager and the English lead subject mentor demonstrate the importance of rigour in identifying major strengths and precise targets for future development, but these have not been widely shared. The partnership recognises this is an area for development and has recently introduced additional training that has the potential to improve practice and to encourage more integration and greater coherence across the training as a whole.

21. The provision of resources is good: each trainee is provided with a laptop installed with generic and subject-specific software, and the base room is well equipped with ICT support resources including computing facilities, interactive white boards, webcams for demonstrations and lesson observations and video editing equipment. The allocation of partnership funding is clear, but its place in strategic planning is unclear.

22. Internal and external moderation procedures are effective in ensuring that the assessment of trainees is consistent and accurate. Internal and external evaluation of the course provides an effective base for improvement planning. The external examiner, appointed by the University of Leicester, provides very effective and critical evaluation of the provision and trainees' evaluations provide a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of support and training. However, the quality of lead subject mentors' subject evaluations is limited and, at the time of the inspection, no evaluation of the ICT training was undertaken by the lead subject mentor for ICT. The contribution of School-based tutors and professional tutors to course evaluation is under-developed.

23. The partnership benchmarks its own provision against other school-based training consortia and its self evaluation accurately identifies key strengths and areas for development. It is responsive to evaluation and assessment of its provision from internal and external sources. Within the constraints of its structure and the time available to its key personnel, it continues to make improvements to ensure that it meets the Requirements, and has systems to ensure the training provides appropriate opportunities for trainees to meet the Standards.