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A further education teacher training  
inspection report  
2006/07

Managing Inspector  
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## The inspection

1. The inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial teacher training of further education (FE) teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the inspection of initial teacher training of further education teachers, both published in 2004.
2. It was conducted in two phases by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), and a specialist additional inspector. Inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2006. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase two of the inspection was completed in June 2007.

## Background

3. The University of East London provides a full-time, pre-service post-graduate certificate in education course (PGCE) for graduates who wish to work in post-compulsory education and training (PCET). The university also works in partnership with three colleges which provide part-time, in-service initial teacher training (ITT) courses for further education teachers and other trainers from the post-compulsory sector. These validated courses lead to the university's certificate of education (Cert Ed), an endorsed qualification which satisfies the Secretary of State's requirements for further education teachers. One partner college also offers a PGCE. Partner colleges have responsibility for providing training and for assessing trainees. As well as the three colleges in the partnership there are also about 20 colleges used for placements by pre-service trainees.
4. Pre-service, PGCE, provision at the university, and in-service, Cert Ed, provision at one of the partner colleges were evaluated. Some 36 trainees are enrolled on the PGCE course and 38 on the Cert Ed. Both courses are modular and governed by the university's credit accumulation scheme. About 80% the trainees on the in-service course are based in the partner college, and the remainder come from a range of public (and some private) sector employment, such as the health service and social care organisations.

## Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees have a strong, practical commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity and support and challenge students well. However, weak literacy skills inhibit the teaching of a few trainees. Programmes are well designed and fit for purpose,

and the quality of the centre-based training for pre-service trainees is high. There are good, systematic, cross-partnership selection procedures and an active diversity policy leading to good black and minority ethnic representation. Leadership is very good at all levels of the partnership and all partners are suitably involved in strategic and operational decisions. An increasingly embedded university quality assurance process is effective in identifying and addressing weaknesses. There are inconsistencies in judgements about trainees' standards across the partnership and the quality of mentoring is not yet consistently good.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees who have a strong, practical commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity and who support and challenge students well
- very good pre-service, centre-based training
- good, systematic, cross-partnership selection procedures
- an active diversity policy leading to good black and minority ethnic representation across the partnership
- the wide involvement of partners in all strategic and operational aspects of the partnership
- strong, effective leadership at all levels of the partnership
- an increasingly embedded university quality assurance process which is effective in identifying and addressing weaknesses.

## Key weaknesses

- inconsistencies in judgements about trainees' standards
- the weak literacy skills of a few trainees
- the variable quality of mentor support.

Further information on strengths and key weaknesses is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

## Achievement of trainees

6. Trainees are committed to teaching and retention is sound. About 90% of pre-service and 86% of in-service trainees successfully complete their courses. Trainees are developing their wider professional skills by playing a full part in their departments, joining tutorials and interviews, organising trips and attending parents' meetings. They are well-organised and have good relationships with their students and other staff. Trainees are committed to their students and effectively put the principles of inclusion and equality of opportunity into practice in their teaching.

7. Trainees have high expectations of their students and set appropriately challenging targets. Trainees are reflective about what they do, in some cases highly so, and work hard to raise their standards of achievement by matching work to their students' needs. They welcome constructive criticism, but some need to develop a more consistently analytical approach, and relate pedagogic theory more clearly to their teaching. Trainees are highly committed to their subjects and their specialist knowledge is strong, although a few are not gaining adequate experience of the full range of post-16 courses in their subjects.

8. Trainees generally plan their lessons thoroughly, produce good teaching resources and try to meet the individual needs of students in their planning. They take good account of previous assessments and evaluations when they understand the messages from them. Most trainees manage lessons well, control discipline and keep all students on task, although a few have problems with the behaviour of younger students. They demonstrate a good understanding of literacy and/or numeracy, assessment for learning and the difference between teaching and learning objectives. They use questions skilfully – including targeted questions - to test and extend students' understanding and deploy a good range of different activities.

9. Some trainees do not take enough account of the literacy and numeracy needs of students by giving them opportunities to work more creatively with their materials and a few are hampered by their own weak numeracy and literacy skills. Most are good at explaining issues and have a lively and interesting delivery. However, they do not always understand how to use information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance their teaching. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety.

10. Trainees know about moderation, internal verification and the role of awarding bodies and are involved in the assessment of assignments and portfolios; they have a good feel for national standards. In lessons, they often spend time with students in groups to check their learning. Although trainees usually understand the strengths and weaknesses of their students, they do not use this knowledge sufficiently in their planning. Trainees mark students' work assiduously and their written feedback to students is good.

11. Informally, and through tutorials, trainees give students effective guidance. They know what services are available to give additional support. Some use individual learning plans very effectively to help students assess their own strengths and weaknesses and plan their own learning.

## Quality of training

12. The structure and content of the training programmes comply with national qualification requirements and have much improved in breadth and level of detail since the last inspection. Both courses have been carefully redesigned with clearly structured progression over six modules. All sessions are fully documented and supported by a range of stimulating materials. The content and layout of the modules encourage trainees progressively to develop their teaching skills. Mentors give trainees opportunities to development their subject knowledge and skills. For in-service trainees, daytime and evening options are available to accommodate different working patterns and the in-service course now links more effectively with other provision in the college, such as skills for life. Although suitable attention is mostly paid to the minimum core of language, literacy and numeracy, it is not yet sufficiently embedded across the partnership.

13. Teacher trainers on both courses are well-qualified, enthusiastic and strongly committed to the trainees and the sector. At the university, members of the core team have undertaken research projects, presented papers to educational conferences and published papers.

14. The quality of teaching in pre-service training sessions is very good, with trainees encouraged to debate a range of issues and to share their experience. University teacher trainers use ILT effectively and know how to make sessions interesting and challenging for trainees with a range of backgrounds and experience. In one session, for example, social sciences, art and design, and business trainees were able to get together in subject groups to share experiences from their placements, were reassured to find that they all faced similar problems of motivating underachieving students, and discussed strategies for tackling this. The quality of teaching in in-service training sessions is satisfactory. Sessions are well planned and firmly based on current pedagogical theory. Since the last inspection, in-service training has developed a better emphasis on the wider aspects of professionalism and presentation. On both courses, strong links are made between theory and practice in training sessions although these links are not always transferred successfully to the lessons taught by trainees.

15. The quality of mentor support has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory overall, with some examples of very good practice. Pre-service trainees have mentors in their placement colleges who are often, although not always, similar subject specialists; all in-service

trainees have suitable subject mentors in their workplaces. While the quality of support given by mentors is often very high, not all mentors have had enough training to perform their duties adequately. Thus, the support they give to trainees, while fulsome enough, is sometimes not sufficiently focused on improvement in the context of training.

16. Teacher trainers are responsive to trainees' individual learning needs. Tutorial provision is strong; tutorials focus on trainees' progress and targets for future development as recorded in individual learning plans. For in-service trainees, the final hour of training sessions is given over to tutorials, with attention paid particularly to study skills support related to tasks and assignments. However, trainees are not under enough pressure to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills. Trainees benefit from mixing with those from a wide variety of different subject areas, but the slow extension of the university's intranet to cover this area of work has inhibited subject specialist networking across the partnership.

17. Assessment procedures are appropriate and fair, closely related to trainees' professional needs and well understood. Feedback is given to trainees on each of their six assignments. While generally supportive, this feedback is not always sufficiently developmental. Assignments are marked carefully against criteria, but because criteria do not cover them, accuracy of language, errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and application of number are not always picked up. Trainees are also given feedback after observations of their teaching. They find this helpful, but in some cases there are discrepancies between commentaries and grades. There is still a lack of rigour in the assessment of in-service trainees.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

18. A standard application pack is available for all prospective trainees and interviewing and selection procedures across the partnership are good. Increasingly, to help ensure quality, partnership programme leaders attend each others' interviews. Arrangements for the accreditation of existing teachers' experience and qualifications are now much improved. The college has an ethical recruitment policy which prevents the recruitment of staff who are unlikely to be able to achieve the required teaching qualification. The college ensures that all new staff are fully aware of the requirement to undertake the Cert Ed, and a starting date is negotiated as part of the contract of employment. All college staff have a record of continuing professional development, and this is linked to the appraisal process and to the college's perception of local needs and trends.

19. Successful applicants for both courses receive general reading lists and course outlines in advance of enrolment but are set no targeted tasks based on a preliminary audit of their skills and experience. This is a missed opportunity recognised by the partnership.

20. The University of East London has the highest proportion of black and minority ethnic students in the country. It has an active policy for widening participation and is a member of the London East Education for Diversity consortium. The partnership analyses the ethnicity, gender, disability and age of trainees together with their relative success rates. The good ethnic balance of the pre-service course, and of the partnership as a whole, demonstrates this commitment to inclusion, although the in-service cohort at the college does not reflect the profile of the college's catchment area. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity at the interview process and throughout the courses and recruitment and publicity literature encourages application from minority ethnic groups.

21. The partnership is very well led and managed by the PCET director at the university. There has been much radical change since the last inspection and this has been rapidly and effectively handled at all levels. The local management of programmes at the university and the college is strong and effective.

22. Partnership representatives are fully involved in all strategic and operational aspects of the partnership. An annually reviewed memorandum of co-operation specifies in detail the terms of the partnership and the responsibilities of each partner. The PCET director chairs the partnership group which is made up of college programme leaders. The partnership group meets once every half term and helps to ensure effective management co-ordination. In the university and the colleges respective programme teams meet regularly and programme leaders from each course can, and do, attend each others' meetings. The allocation of resources across the partnership is clear and open.

23. For pre-service trainees in placement colleges, mentoring procedures are well established. Mentors are well briefed on the importance of their role and guided by a detailed mentor handbook. Pre-service trainees and mentors sign agreements which commit each to a number of appropriate rights and responsibilities. Mentors undergo training, which includes an overview of the requirements of the PGCE programme and the nature of the mentor role. However, attendance at mentor training is variable. Mentors may not attend training if they have other college commitments or if they consider themselves sufficiently experienced. College senior managers recognise that ITT mentoring makes an important contribution to improving teaching and raising of standards across the college. Using support from the partnership, effective systems for selecting, inducting and training mentors have recently been introduced and time and funds have been allocated for mentoring.

24. The university has a number of quality assurance processes which aim to ensure high standards across the partnership and there are well established procedures for validation and course review. The revalidation process is rigorous and helps to establish coherence and consistency across the programme. Meanwhile, a partnership review, drawing on reviews from



the university and each partner college, is produced annually. The review is informed by performance data, minutes of meetings, trainee and mentor evaluations and external examiners' reports. The university appoints external examiners for PGCE and Cert Ed courses, although they do not observe teaching. Each partner college conducts its own regular monitoring, review and self-assessment.

25. Cross-partnership moderation arrangements have recently been put in place, although it is too early to say whether they will be able to remedy the inconsistencies noted by external examiners in 2006. Pre-service trainees are observed jointly by mentors and course tutors. Moderation of the assessment of teaching at the college takes place through joint observations with other in-service programme leaders.

26. Since the last inspection, the university has worked hard to address problems identified by inspectors at the college. A detailed action plan was put in place and all the areas of development have been successfully addressed. In April 2006, external consultants produced report on progress and recommendations for further action. The PCET director has also been very active at the college supporting improvement in the in-service course. She was involved in the appointment of new course tutors, for example, and in a sample of trainee interviews.

27. Although arrangements for assuring the quality of mentoring are underdeveloped, an increasingly effective, partnership-wide quality assurance process has been developed. This fully incorporates the partnership and is effective in identifying and addressing weaknesses. As a result, the partnership's capacity of improve is good.

## Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the HEI Partnership at the time of the inspection;

- Barking College
- Newham College
- Havering College