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A secondary initial teacher training
full inspection report
2006/07

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Buckingham works in partnership with schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in English, history, mathematics and science in the 14-19 age range. At the time of the inspection in 2006/7 there were three trainees, all science specialists, based in two schools.

The course was established in association with the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and designed to meet the needs of those employed in a teaching role within independent and maintained schools. Trainees spend most of the year in their employing schools and undertake a three-week placement in a maintained school. They also attend three three-day residential training sessions at the university.

Because of the small number involved in the course, there is no separate report on the Standards achieved by the 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

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

- the intellectual challenge of the university-based training sessions

- the positive effect of the second school placement on trainees' teaching.

Points for action

- improving the use of the individual learning plans

- ensuring that all mentors and tutors can assess trainees' progress, evaluate lessons and set targets effectively

- improving the monitoring and evaluation of school-based training.

Points for consideration

- developing written criteria for the selection of trainees

- providing opportunities for trainees to learn about 14-19 vocational pathways

- involving second schools more in developing the course

- developing a coherent plan for improving the course.

The quality of training

1.   The training prepares trainees to teach across the 14-19 age range and provides them with sufficient opportunities to meet the Standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status. The two partnership schools this year have provided suitable placements and have given trainees appropriate teaching experiences.

2.   The placements in two schools provide the trainees with a contrasting and complementary experience. The three-week period spent in a second school is planned well to provide the trainees with an opportunity to broaden their experience in areas such as lesson planning and managing pupils' behaviour. However, because the second schools were for the 11-16 age range, the trainees did not gain experience of vocational aspects of the 16-19 curriculum.

3.   The assignments make a satisfactory contribution to the trainees' progress towards the Standards. One invites the trainees to relate a general issue of teaching to their subject. This has successfully led them to research different approaches to science teaching and to reflect critically upon and vary their own practice.

4.   The quality of the training sessions seen at the university was good. The majority were intellectually challenging and thought-provoking. However, the trainers missed opportunities to model different teaching approaches to aid the trainees in developing their own practice. The quality of school-based training observed ranged from satisfactory to good. The best session was strongly focused on specific Standards and provided perceptive feedback, constructive criticism and sound advice to the trainee. The other sessions gave the trainees encouragement but did not challenge them sufficiently to consider how to improve their teaching.

5.   The course meets trainees' individual needs satisfactorily, but this varies considerably because of the different ways the trainers interpret their role. The school-based training devised by the mentors has regard to the training at the university and to the second school experience. However, not all trainees had an individual learning plan from the start of the course, although this is the university's requirement. As a result, the planning of the school-based training for these trainees has not been tailored well to their individual needs for at least part of the year. The omission of an audit of trainees' knowledge, skills and understanding of curricula, syllabuses and information technology meant that prior learning was not formally accredited and that individual needs were not always targeted sufficiently.

6.   Most of the feedback on trainees' teaching provided by tutors, mentors and other staff is good. However, some observations of lessons do not always have a clear focus or generate targets for improvement. The consequence of this is that not all of the trainees make sufficient progress in planning lessons, in using a range of teaching strategies or in managing classes.

7.   Trainers understand their assessment roles and responsibilities well. Aided by the training they receive at the university and nationally published guidance they

generally make accurate judgements at the end of the course of trainees' achievement of the Standards. The trainees maintain a suitable record of professional development, although not all used this effectively to monitor their progress towards the Standards.   Mentors' assessments of trainees' teaching, however, are sometimes too generous. As a result, trainees do not always receive clear messages about what they need to do next to improve, and consequently do not make sustained progress.   Nevertheless, judgements at the pass/fail borderline are secure.

Management and quality assurance

8.   Trainees are provided with brief, accurate information about the course before they apply. The selection procedures are satisfactory and ensure that good trainees are recruited. The trainees begin the course with outstanding subject knowledge and a strong commitment to teaching. Although the selection interview at the university is based on an appropriate set of questions, there are no written criteria to inform final decisions, as recommended by the Training and Development Agency. There are some missed opportunities for providing successful applicants with guidance on pre-course reading or other activities to help them prepare for the training.

9.   The partnership agreement meets the Requirements and ensures the active involvement of schools and the university in the planning, organisation and management of the course. The management committee fulfils its remit effectively to oversee the development of the course and to monitor and evaluate performance over time. Communication between the employing schools and university trainers is good. The university's requirement that all trainers in the employing school attend university-based training and meetings is strictly enforced. There are clear criteria for the selection of schools. However, despite making a significant contribution to the training, the second school plays no part in the formal management of the partnership.

10.   For the most part, roles and responsibilities are clear. Mentors are highly committed to the training and to the trainees. They give generously of their time to fulfil their broad remit and receive good support from senior school staff, although not all have a good understanding of how to carry out their role as trainers. The responsibilities of the new post of training manager are not yet included in the course handbook and are consequently not understood by trainers.

11.   Termly meetings and training sessions at the university foster the productive relationships that exist between mentors and tutors, and provide schools with the information necessary to organise the training. The content of the sessions is relevant to introducing mentors and tutors to the course's systems and procedures but has not ensured that they all can carry out their role, for example, in relation to individual learning plans and target setting.

12.   The quality assurance systems and procedures ensure that the training complies with the Requirements. Where the university is aware of weaknesses or they are drawn to its attention, it takes prompt action to remedy them. However, they are not robust enough to have identified shortcomings in the quality of school-based training. As a result, not all of the trainees achieve their full potential by the end of the course.

13.   Assessment procedures are described clearly in course documentation and arrangements for the moderation of the final assessment are robust. The procedures for internal and independent external moderation are, for the most part, employed rigorously. However, joint observation is not used consistently and, as a result, some over-generous judgements have been made about the trainees.

14.   At this relatively early stage in the development of the course, the university shows a commitment to improvement but, as yet, does not have a coherent improvement plan. Some improvements suggested by external consultants, including the introduction of written selection criteria and emphasis on developments in the 14-19 curriculum, have not been implemented effectively. The partnership's evaluation of the first year of the course gives insufficient attention to the impact of its management and quality assurance systems on the training. The university is assiduous in collecting the views of the trainees on the course but is not yet fully systematic in shaping these, and the views of the trainers, into an evaluation of the overall quality of the training.