

University of Cumbria

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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Cumbria works in partnership with 175 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers one year postgraduate courses in art, music, modern languages, citizenship, English, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, religious education and science. There are also undergraduate courses in physical education, English, ICT, mathematics, religious education, history, music and science. At the time of the inspection there were 516 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: 1

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the consistently high quality of university-based training, particularly in meeting trainees' individual needs
- the excellent selection procedures, which result in the recruitment of trainees from a very wide range of backgrounds
- the innovative work carried out with a number of external agencies, which very effectively enhances the training programme
- the particularly effective management of the partnership involving schools situated in other parts of the country
- the exemplary work carried out by partnership schools working collaboratively.

Points for consideration

- ensuring that all subject mentors are sufficiently well trained to provide consistently high quality training
- improving links between whole course and subject level development planning.

The quality of training

1. Both the postgraduate and undergraduate programmes have been successfully modified to take account of recent developments. This has included careful consideration of how course content is matched to the new Standards. All subject programmes give suitable emphasis to the *Every Child Matters* agenda, and content reflects recent developments, such as changes to the National Curriculum. A number of subject programmes, for example, English and religious education, include highly relevant content on assessment for learning, and work with ICT is a strong feature of the music programme. Trainees are strongly encouraged to be reflective and analytical, and as a result they are able to evaluate their work and subsequently improve their practice. There are strong links between theoretical and classroom based work, and assignments support the training programmes effectively. In some subjects, for example, modern languages and geography, links between university-based training and school-based training are particularly strong.

2. Trainees now have the opportunity to discuss generic educational studies issues within mixed subject groups, and topics are very effectively followed up within subject specific sessions. There is very good coherence between this work and the generic studies programme within partnership schools, where training programmes are planned carefully to complement university based sessions. Trainees benefit from the opportunity to explore issues further within the school context. Whilst the generic training programme for undergraduate trainees is not as strong as that provided for postgraduates, it is nevertheless effective in covering a range of important topics.

3. The pattern of school experience placements helps to ensure that trainees are gradually introduced to teaching, as appropriate to their individual needs, and this helps to build their confidence. A significant strength of the training programmes is the opportunity provided for enrichment towards the end of the course. This is a strong feature of all subject courses, and is exemplified well through the extremely effective work in music, where trainees benefit greatly from placements with a local authority music support service and community music organisation.

4. The high quality training results in trainees gaining a thorough understanding of pedagogical issues and knowledge of effective strategies for promoting learning in their subjects. University based training is particularly strong. It is often cited by trainees as an outstanding feature of the programme. Subject teams consist of well qualified and highly experienced staff, who frequently model best practice in teaching during university-based sessions. They work well together in sharing ideas for programme development.

5. A major strength of the provision is the innovative work carried out with external agencies, which enhances the training programme. For example, the very successful projects carried out in conjunction with ESCalate (the Higher Education Subject Centre) and 'Creative Partnerships'.

6. In some subject areas, notably English, modern languages and geography, strong guidance is provided for school-based trainers, including a good range of relevant suggested tasks and activities. This supports high quality school-based training. In other subjects, school-based training, although effective overall, is less well focused. In most cases, records of weekly meetings between trainees and mentors showed that school-based training sessions were purposeful and well organised. A minority of subject mentors, however, were not fully prepared for their role, usually because they had not attended subject training sessions provided by the university.

7. Feedback to trainees from tutors, on assignments and lesson observations, is thorough and focuses sharply on issues related to teaching and learning, enabling trainees to develop their classroom practice very effectively. The quality of feedback from subject mentors is more variable. The less effective feedback, whilst providing good advice on planning and class management, does not focus sufficiently on pupils' learning.

8. Both at the university and in schools, there is a genuine commitment to meeting trainees' individual needs, and this is a significant strength of the training. Excellent tailored support is provided in areas such as ICT and essay writing. Very good additional support is provided for trainees with specific learning needs, such as dyslexia. Subject enhancement courses are effective in helping trainees to become confident in their knowledge of subject issues. Subject knowledge auditing is carried out very thoroughly at the university, but in a few instances the outcomes are not always shared with subject mentors. In such cases the potential for auditing to positively influence school-based subject training is not realised.

9. The university's virtual learning environment provides very good ongoing support for trainees, which is particularly useful when they are on placements. In modern languages, reflective reviews are sent by email each week to tutors who respond in detail, providing excellent tailored support for individuals.

10. There are very good systems to monitor trainees' progress through regular lesson observations, weekly reviews with mentors, professional development forms and tripartite reviews. Target setting and action planning for trainees is mostly good or better, although a small number of subject mentors do not always set clear and manageable targets. Nevertheless, the assessment process is clear and robust, and well understood by all. External examiner's reports indicate assessments against the standards are accurate.

Management and quality assurance

11. The excellent systems for recruitment and selection are a key strength of the university's work. There is a very strong commitment to 'widening participation', with considerable success in attracting applicants from a broad range of backgrounds, including those with non-standard qualifications. Substantial pre-entry information

and guidance is provided for all, including informal 'advisory interviews', which provide prospective candidates with the tailored advice needed to assist them in making a decision about entering teaching. Much emphasis is placed on catering for mature learners and candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds. A wide range of routes means that candidates can be matched to the most appropriate programme. All of this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.

12. Dedicated recruitment staff at each campus in the North of England work very effectively to ensure consistency in the selection process across the university. Adherence to a common policy on selection ensures that agreed procedures are applied. Interviews include academic needs analysis, thus enabling staff to gain valuable evidence of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses. All applicants receive detailed feedback following interview, and successful applicants are provided with suitable pre-course tasks. Reasons for rejection are carefully examined.

13. The partnership is well established, with many schools having been involved for a considerable length of time. The university is working across the partnership to promote a wide range of professional development activities for mentors, including a Masters level course for teachers. Schools are strongly committed to their work with the university. The geographical spread of the partnership is in no way a barrier to involvement, and the way in which long-distance partnerships are managed is a strength of the university's work. For example, a school in Exmouth is actively involved in the partnership, and their location facilitates links with the recognised high-quality training model provided by the University of Exeter.

14. A significant development since the last inspection is the increase in collaborative work being carried out by partnership schools. For example, some outstanding work is carried out by the schools in the South Lakes Federation, where training on particular aspects is shared across the participating schools. This ensures that trainees benefit from the input of specialist teachers, as well as the chance to experience a good variety of educational contexts. Schools also work effectively in cluster groups, with some cluster groups developing and refining key elements of the school based training programme, which are then used well across the whole partnership.

15. Some outstanding partnership work is carried out at subject level. For example, in modern languages, tutors are clearly aware of the strengths of particular departments within certain schools, and capitalise very effectively on mentors' areas of specialism and expertise. Subject tutors also arrange for new mentors to visit very experienced and skilled mentors in other schools, and to observe their work. This has proved to be particularly successful.

16. Tutors visit schools on a regular basis in order to carry out joint observations and monitor the quality of school-based training. University-based training sessions for co-ordinating mentors emphasise the need to monitor the quality of school-based subject training; as a result, the great majority of co-ordinating mentors carry out this role very well. However, in spite of the university's efforts, a significant minority of subject mentors do not routinely attend training sessions provided by the

university. In a few cases this impacts upon their confidence in key mentoring skills, such as one to one training, target setting and lesson observation.

17. The university uses a wide variety of evaluative material, including external examiners' reports and trainee evaluations in planning improvements to the training programmes. Data are gathered together and feed into the annual evaluatory report, which informs a rolling improvement plan. Although the process is carefully scrutinised and monitored, there is limited evidence of coherence between improvement planning at subject level and that at whole course level. As a result, the impact of actions on the quality of school-based training is not always clearly discernable across the provision.

18. Procedures for monitoring the assessment of trainees are particularly rigorous. A sample of all assignments is second marked, and very careful attention is paid to cross-campus moderation.