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A primary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Wolverhampton works in partnership with 206 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a three year BEd course with either an early years (3-7) or primary (5-11) focus and a primary postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). At the time of the inspection there were 361 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

- leadership and management at all levels
- the recruitment and secondment of well qualified staff who are expert trainers
- the progress made by trainees with non standard qualifications
- the high employment rates at the end of the course
- the use of the virtual learning environment to aid communication between all partners
- the professional development of tutors and mentors
- the internal and external moderation of trainees' teaching
- the involvement of the partnership in 'special projects' in collaboration with other providers.

Points for consideration

- reviewing procedures for recording a candidate's performance at interview
- improving the quality of written subject feedback from mentors.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training has been maintained from the time of the previous inspection. There are significant strengths both in the central training and in schools. Tutors are highly regarded by the trainees for their expertise and in schools trainees observe some excellent teaching. Attachment tutors also bring a wealth of expertise of initial teacher training to the partnership. Training is very strong in developing trainees' ability to teach. Tutors consistently model good practice. An exceptional range of expert practitioners is used effectively to deliver aspects of the professional studies course.
2. School-based training effectively complements the training at the university. Mentors fully support trainees when they are undertaking their assignments and tasks. The partnership carefully selects and monitors all placements to provide a comprehensive set of compatible experiences. For example, trainees are able to revisit an age range where they have failed to meet the Standards well at the first attempt. Schools and trainees receive early notification of their placements. Accurate targets from previous placements are passed on and form the basis of individual action plans. Trainees are aware of their targets and areas for development. They make good progress in relation to their starting points.
3. Courses are well structured. Trainees are prepared thoroughly to teach across the age range for which they are being trained. Schools provide good training opportunities with a keen focus on diversity and inclusion. Strong features are the arrangement of short, focused placements in schools with particular strengths, such as in providing for pupils with English as an additional language, and short complementary placements to meet individual professional development needs. The response to meeting trainees' individual needs throughout the training is good. The assessment and development of their subject knowledge is thorough. The audits and action plans are excellent, and trainees' progress is monitored regularly. Although successful candidates are given helpful guidance on key texts before the course begins, opportunities are missed to use the outcomes from the initial subject knowledge tests at interview to inform individual pre-course preparation.
4. Tutors are assigned to trainees for the duration of the course and this enables them to know trainees' strengths and weaknesses well. Trainees' progress in teaching is monitored and assessed systematically by both tutors and mentors, although written feedback is not always well focused on subject development. Joint observations and moderation of trainees' files are used very effectively to ensure judgements about trainees' capability are accurate. Trainees receive good support from booster classes and they have access to a range of online materials on the university's virtual learning environment. This system is outstanding in providing opportunities for trainees to share ideas and communicate with their tutors or peers. Even so, the partnership is not complacent and is developing e-portfolios as a way of enhancing the training programme through the use of information and communication technology.

5. All courses have been modified to cover themes such as the creative curriculum and personalised learning. Very good attention is paid to ensuring that trainees are kept abreast of current educational thinking and new initiatives. The links between the subject modules and the elements from the professional studies modules are very strong. For example, trainees work with schools at 'Beaudesert', a site on the edge of Cannock Chase, on cross curricular projects and thematic approaches to teaching. The numerous 'special projects', together with a focus on learning outside of school, provides trainees with a very rich training experience.

Management and quality assurance

6. The partnership has no difficulty attracting applications for its training programmes. There are clear guidelines for admissions. Trainees with a wide range of prior experience are recruited including about a third on the undergraduate course with non standard qualifications. These trainees do well. Last year, three out of six first class degrees were awarded to trainees who joined the course with non standard qualifications. The partnership has considerable success in recruiting males. The proportion of primary trainees from minority ethnic communities is good in comparison to other providers although the partnership has still some way to go to meet its own target. Despite a high withdrawal rate of Year 1 undergraduate trainees last year, the partnership recruits trainees who are highly enthusiastic, reflective and committed to their professional development. The university is monitoring withdrawal rates carefully and giving extra personal tutor support to trainees during their first year.

7. Interview procedures are well established although there is scope for maintaining better records of the process and particularly of the candidates' performance in the subject audits taken at interview. Booster classes are offered to all postgraduate trainees prior to the start of the course and a considerable number enrol on these. This is a good initiative.

8. Leadership and management at all levels are very good. There is a high level of stability in the senior leadership with no changes since the last inspection. The team has been strengthened with the appointment of a new dean in July 2007 and an increase in the number of module tutors. Seconded headteachers and leading practitioners from partnership schools play an important role in course review and development. For example, two years ago, a headteacher was seconded to the post of partnership development adviser and involved Year 1 trainees in a paired placement pilot. This has now become an integral feature of the Year 1 training programme.

9. The committee structure has been reviewed and is well conceived. Committee minutes show that they fulfil their purposes effectively and that the views of partnership school staff are heard and acted upon. The trainees are represented well on the tutor/trainee forum and the meetings provide a good opportunity for trainees to raise issues and influence course development.

10. Roles and responsibilities of all partners are well defined and understood. Trainees are placed in good schools and there are effective systems for tracking the trainees' practical experience. There are clear criteria for the selection and de-selection of schools which are adhered to. Communication between all partners is very good.

11. The induction programme for new university tutors and attachment tutors is very good and prepares them well for their responsibilities. Mentor training is a key strength with differentiated training provided for new and experienced mentors. Mentors are very well briefed in the new Standards and Requirements and are kept abreast of current educational thinking and government initiatives. As a result, they are confident in planning a school-based training programme to meet the trainees' needs and they speak enthusiastically about the professional development rewards of mentoring. University tutors are encouraged to develop their research interests and to respond to the national agenda. For example, they support the Black Country Challenge to raise attainment in English, maths and science. The tutors' engagement in 'special projects', in collaboration with other providers in the region, has a very positive impact on widening the trainees' interests and on extending their knowledge and understanding of the educational scene.

12. Internal and external moderation arrangements are very strong. Excellent opportunities are provided for university tutors and mentors to carry out joint observations of trainees' teaching and for mentors to meet at the university to moderate trainees' files. External examiners confirm that the moderation of trainees' teaching is accurate. Their reports are detailed and provide good evidence about the high quality of training and school placements.

13. There is extensive evaluation of school and centre-based training by tutors, mentors and trainees. Questionnaires are well constructed to aid statistical analysis. Evaluative evidence is analysed thoroughly. A very comprehensive annual report is produced for each training programme and there are detailed cluster reports for each module. These reports provide firm evidence that the partnership assesses the impact of its training programme and changes the structure and content in order to improve. Similarly, placement evaluations are subject to rigorous analysis and provide robust information on the quality of school-based training. However, as yet, the outcomes are not routinely disseminated to schools.

14. Issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed. The 2007/08 school of education teaching and action plan is well constructed and defines key objectives against key standards. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the university and within the wider partnership. Leaders are committed to ongoing self evaluation and improvement. They have made very good progress in benchmarking their entry qualifications and destination data against other providers. Employment rates for trainees from the University of Wolverhampton are higher than those of other West Midlands providers and considerably higher than the national average.