

Liverpool Hope University

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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

Liverpool Hope University works in partnership with 146 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers courses in mathematics, English, English with drama, science, geography, information and communication technology, history, religious education, physical education, modern languages, music and performing arts. At the time of the inspection there were 314 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 combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and quality assurance arrangements in 2007-08, with the judgements from the scrutiny of further evidence submitted to Ofsted in February 2008.

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 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

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

Key strengths

- the varied, challenging and stimulating content of the training programmes, which provides trainees with a wide range of experiences to support their progress
- the excellent partnership that exists between subject tutors and subject departments within schools
- the way in which the provision is tailored precisely to meet trainees' individual needs
- the outstanding leadership and management of the programmes by university staff
- the extremely rigorous procedures for assuring the quality of the training.

Point for consideration

- encouraging a greater number of subject mentors to become involved in the selection of trainees.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. This is reflected in the outstanding standards achieved by trainees by the end of the course.
2. The structure of the course is very effective in supporting trainees' progress towards the Standards. At the beginning of the course, trainees gain experience of working in primary schools, and also in an educational setting other than a mainstream school; for example, one trainee worked with a community theatre group, some worked in special schools, and others carried out international work with both children and adult learners. Trainees benefit greatly from this experience, which encourages them to consider how learning takes place in a variety of contexts. The serial placement at the start of the course enables trainees to immediately take forward their learning from university-based sessions into school, as well as providing the opportunity for them to discuss their experiences of school with peers and tutors. Trainees gain experience of teaching 11-18 year olds across the full ability range.
3. The content of all professional studies and subject programmes has been modified to reflect developments such as the revised National Curriculum, the *Every Child Matters* agenda and personalised learning. Guest speakers are often current practitioners who bring stimulating and relevant experiences to the attention of trainees. Opportunities for residential visits in geography, science, mathematics and modern foreign languages further enrich trainees' experience. For example, in geography, a link with a university in Poland has provided a first rate experience for the trainees to practice their skills of teaching to students for whom English is a second language. This raises their awareness of team teaching and the importance of clear communication skills, as well as enhancing their awareness of the European dimension of their studies.
4. Coherence between the various elements of the training programme is excellent. The timing of sessions is very carefully planned to support the progression of trainees' understanding throughout the course. Contributions from guest speakers, university tutors, school staff and pupils combine well with opportunities for trainees to engage in peer teaching. Overall, the rich and varied training programme provides a broad, stimulating and challenging experience for trainees, who rightly comment that 'everything fits together so well.'
5. Assignments and tasks are relevant and support the training programme effectively. The reflective journal, being piloted this year in geography, is particularly effective in supporting trainees' development and gives them an excellent sense of their own progress towards meeting the Standards. It also allows the tutor, through examining the journals, to ensure that the training is adjusted, if necessary, to meet individual needs.
6. Tutors have very high expectations and provide a high level of challenge to trainees, who typically comment that they are 'constantly pushed' in order to fulfil

their potential. Tutors model good practice during university sessions, and use a variety of techniques in order to make a lasting impression on trainees. For instance, mathematics tutors played the part of disruptive pupils, and a music tutor deliberately demonstrated weak practice in vocal teaching in order to initiate a valuable discussion amongst trainees, which played a key part in improving their own practice.

7. Almost all trainees say that they receive high quality training from subject and professional mentors, and documented evidence supports this. The great majority of feedback from lesson observations is of very good quality. Records of meetings between mentors and trainees show that trainees' progress is discussed in considerable detail, and relevant, achievable targets, linked securely to the Standards, are regularly set and reviewed.

8. The emphasis on meeting trainees' individual needs throughout the course is a significant strength. Pre-course tasks are personalised, and booster courses, reported by trainees to be 'excellent', ensure that subject knowledge is developed effectively. Schools receive detailed information on trainees' experience, strengths and areas for development in advance of a placement, and this is often used very effectively to design a tailored training programme. Training plans highlight personalised activities, and specific tasks are allocated to individuals throughout the training. In almost all cases, school placements are carefully matched to trainees' needs and the great majority of trainees benefit from placements in contrasting schools.

9. Procedures for monitoring the progress of trainees against the Standards are very effective and progress is thoroughly evidenced. Regular reviews, involving school-based mentors, formally assess progress. Trainees have an accurate and detailed understanding of the progress they are making, and are well informed on what they need to do in order to improve further. All assessments are rigorously moderated.

Management and quality assurance

10. Rigorous selection procedures result in the recruitment of suitable trainees, and over recent years, the number of trainees withdrawing from the course has decreased. Entry requirements and selection procedures are clearly laid out in the university prospectus and also on the web site. All applications are thoroughly scrutinised by subject specialists, and a wide range of factors are considered in deciding which applicants should be invited for interview. Each candidate's potential is explored through the quality of a presentation given to the interview panel, along with their performance in interview. In a minority of cases, feedback given to unsuccessful candidates is a little unclear in specifying future areas for development.

11. Subject tutors start to gather information on each candidates' strengths and areas for development at the selection stage. As a result, pre-course tasks for

successful candidates are personalised and support the effective use of trainees' time prior to the start of the course. All of these tasks are followed up by tutors at the beginning of the course.

12. Although the number of trainees recruited from minority ethnic backgrounds remains relatively low, there has been a small increase over the past few years. The university continues to successfully implement strategies designed to bring about further improvement; for example, working with representatives from the Somalian community, with the aim of tailoring training programmes to precisely meet the needs of individuals. Trainees with disabilities have the opportunity to engage in discussion with a specialist adviser prior to attending interview, and if successful are provided with plans, accessible by tutors, that outline their particular needs.

13. The partnership is well-established and stable, but this does not prevent the university from being active in seeking new partnership schools. University and school staff share the aim that working in partnership can involve activities such as providing continuing professional development for teachers and working on action research projects, as well as participating in initial teacher training. Such work continues to enhance the mutually beneficial links that have been built up between the university and partnership schools.

14. School staff are fully involved in the management and development of the training programme. Through a range of committees and working groups, representatives from schools and university staff work very effectively together in ensuring that training is up to date and consistently meets the needs of trainees. For example, the 'Futures Group', which includes both university staff and representatives from schools within each local authority within the partnership, has worked particularly well in looking at new and innovative developments. These are then communicated to and discussed by a wider group of staff. However, in some subject areas there has been a decline in the number of subject mentors involved in interviewing candidates, and consequently, their valuable input as part of the selection process is not consistent across subjects.

15. The partnership agreement has been modified and improved since the last inspection, and the new layout is particularly helpful in providing a clear overview of the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the training.

16. The university actively encourages partnership schools to evaluate their provision for ITT, and has introduced a good quality proforma to support this process. At the moment this exercise is optional, although those schools that have analysed and evaluated the quality of their work in training teachers have found it to be useful in informing further improvement. There is some early evidence that this work is beginning to impact positively on the work of the partnership.

17. The excellent partnership that exists between subject tutors and subject departments within schools is an outstanding feature of the provision. Subject tutors know school departments and subject mentors extremely well, and in many cases this has led to very effective collaborative work. For example, tutors carefully match

trainees to certain school departments, knowing that certain mentors are able to provide high quality support on specific issues. This works particularly well in the case of some trainees who do not make the expected progress early on in the course, and many of these have gone on to successfully complete their training as a result of the support provided.

18. Subject mentors speak very highly of the training provided by the university, which gives the opportunity to discuss current national trends within particular subjects, as well as ensuring that mentors are fully equipped to carry out their roles. The university provides specific training for new mentors, which covers key mentoring skills, such as observation skills and target setting, in much detail. Continued support for new mentors in their schools ensures that they quickly become confident in their roles. Communication between university and school-based trainers is highly effective. Professional mentors and subject mentors alike feel strongly that the university listens to their views and that they are able to maintain an open and honest dialogue with university tutors.

19. Leadership and management, both at whole course and subject level, are excellent. As a result, the quality of training, identified as a strength at the last inspection, has been further improved. Subject tutors share a common approach and work together very effectively, and this is a major factor in ensuring consistency of quality across subjects. The course director provides very strong leadership and is actively involved in all aspects of course management, including frequent contact with partnership schools.

20. The university gathers a wide range of evaluative material throughout the course from all of those involved in the training, and modifications are made as a result of this. Trainees and mentors feel that the university is happy to listen to feedback and take on board suggestions.

21. Procedures for assuring the quality of school-based training are extremely rigorous. Subject tutors carry out frequent joint observations with mentors, and scrutinise all lesson observation feedback and records of meetings. Professional tutors also visit schools in order to monitor the quality of training, as well as gathering feedback from trainees and mentors. In rare cases where trainees may have concerns about the quality of school-based training, university staff are quick to intervene and resolve any difficulties. The external adviser provides very useful and informative feedback.

22. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision are extremely effective, and as a result staff have a very accurate overview of strengths and areas for development. This informs excellent quality action planning, which clearly identifies strategies and success criteria.