

London South Bank University

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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The London South Bank University works in partnership with 52 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers six routes for primary, four of which were inspected. Those routes inspected are a one year postgraduate programme in early years or primary education, and flexible and part time postgraduate courses in primary education. All courses lead to a postgraduate certificate of education. At the time of the inspection there were 213 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 2

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 very strong commitment to equality, inclusion and citizenship during recruitment and in fostering community cohesion
- good leadership and management with a real commitment to innovation and improvement
- the good centre-based teaching in core and foundation subjects
- the placement in an alternative education setting to promote trainees' awareness of the *Every Child Matters* agenda
- the trainees' extensive, relevant and good quality evidence of progress towards the Standards.

Points for consideration

- improving the use of subject-specific feedback in schools
- strengthening the links between central and school-based training in some placement schools
- ensuring that the effectiveness of all recently introduced systems is evaluated.

The quality of training

1. The good quality training identified in the last inspection has been maintained and, in many ways, enhanced.
2. The content and structure of the training meets the Requirements in full and provides comprehensive coverage of the age ranges that trainees are training to teach, as well as those before and after. This is achieved through very careful planning of the training programme and by placing appropriate emphasis on the trainees' responsibility for self-study. Subject knowledge is suitably emphasised and handbooks are of good quality and indicate clearly how the training supports trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards. Good account is taken of recent initiatives such as The Rose Review and *Every Child Matters*. The training includes a good range of directed activities which ensure an appropriate focus on pupils' learning.
3. All elements of the central training link together very well. There is a good balance between theory and practice and this is a strong feature of the training. The equalities, inclusion and citizenship elements of the training are a significant and effective core feature which runs through all aspects of the training and prepares trainees very well for teaching, especially in inner city schools. Cross curricular links are strong in English, mathematics and science. Training in foundation subjects such as history and art is thorough and innovative with a good emphasis on practical teaching. The alternative education setting placement provides a very good vehicle for addressing the *Every Child Matters* agenda and this is a good feature of the provision. Trainees are well trained in using information and communication technology (ICT) to support their teaching and there is a good balance between direct teaching and the high expectation of trainees to manage their own self-study. Although directed tasks are suitable and support school-based training well, the links between central and school-based training are less well defined in some placement schools because mentors are not always sufficiently clear about their training role.
4. A key strength in the centre-based training is the enthusiasm and skill of the tutors who trainees describe as inspirational, especially in English. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that trainees succeed, even when they are less secure in their subject knowledge. In mathematics, for example, trainees are successfully encouraged to overcome initial fears of the subject and become competent and enthusiastic teachers of mathematics. Training models good primary practice in the use of resources, class management and the creative and innovative delivery of the curriculum. Although sessions cover common topics in both the primary and foundation stage curriculum, training is well adapted to meet the individual needs of trainees through effective group work and differentiated tasks.
5. At its best, school-based training enhances and develops all that trainees have learnt at the centre. In some instances, however, although school-based mentors and class teachers are providing effective feedback to trainees on their pedagogy, they are giving insufficient feedback on their skills as teachers of specific subjects.

6. The training takes very good account of trainees' individual needs. Tutors know the trainees well and subject knowledge in particular is carefully assessed and developed throughout the course. Good support is offered to trainees who struggle, for example through twilight training on specific areas of weakness in mathematics. Audits are rigorous and the resulting self-study action plans are well monitored by tutors. Trainees' individual files are detailed and systematically monitored and indicate suitable targets which are generally met as a result of the good support provided. Trainees who fail assignments are provided with good quality individual support and almost all pass at resubmission.

7. There are rigorous and effective systems in place to monitor and track trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards. A range of different methods of assessing trainees' progress, such as presentations, essays and posters, is used to good effect. These cater well for the different learning needs of trainees and model well the best principles of assessment methodology. Comprehensive files of evidence and personal learning plans are kept and these provide detailed and relevant evidence to support the trainees' self assessment of having met each Standard. These are checked and signed off at appropriate points in the training. Assignment feedback forms provide clear and helpful indications of strengths and weakness and what the trainee needs to do to improve. Trainees' teaching is accurately assessed against the Standards, and clear targets for improvement are indicated.

Management and quality assurance

8. The partnership has an effective recruitment and selection policy and well organised procedures which fully reflect its strong commitment to the celebration of diversity. The course handbook is clear and provides accurate information about selection, expectations and assessment so that potential candidates are able to make well informed choices. The selection and interview process is rigorous and transparent. The criteria for selection are very clear at every stage of the process and unsuccessful candidates know both why they have been unsuccessful and that they are welcome to reapply. The university utilises the experience and expertise of staff from partnership schools, and a range of university staff in the recruitment process. All staff are well prepared to enable them to interview effectively and ensure consistency.

9. The partnership's commitment to equality manifests itself in its proactive approach to the recruitment of under-represented groups and enrichment programmes such as the Baltimore Black Leadership Programme. The recruitment and retention of black and minority ethnic trainees is higher than other similar providers. The innovative 'taster' courses result in a guaranteed interview on receipt of an application. Similar courses are arranged to encourage men into early years and primary school teaching and the proportion of men recruited is consistently above average. Many trainees say they are drawn to the provider because of this very explicit commitment to diversity, inclusion and community cohesion. All

candidates complete an initial self-assessment and those offered a place receive a tailored reading list and set of suggested activities. All trainees are expected to undertake a pre-course assignment including reading and school-based observations. The majority finish their training.

10. There is a relatively new leadership team in place with a strong commitment to improvement. It is too early, however, for the impact of actions they have taken to have been evaluated. A key feature of the department's management is its honest and rigorous self-evaluation. This has resulted in an accurate assessment of how well it is doing and the identification of a good range of actions intended to bring about further improvement. The progress of groups of trainees is carefully monitored. The recently introduced tracking system has the capacity to enhance the department's ability to monitor the progress of individual trainees. Subject leadership is good and subject action plans are coherent and well designed, leading to improved outcomes for trainees. Members of the partnership make an effective contribution to the planning and delivery of training. Trainers from schools play an active part in centre-based training and their expertise is utilised well to provide trainees with practical school-based experience in subjects such as ICT and history.

11. There is a clear, well constructed and effective partnership agreement which results in generally good consistency of expectation and practice. A recent success is the development of small groups or clusters of schools working with a single university tutor to provide trainees with training and support more closely tailored to their needs. Placements are carefully managed to ensure trainees experience teaching in two key stages in a range of school contexts. A good initiative is the current work of the department to develop a data base of the specific expertise available in schools so that it can match trainees more precisely to placements and better meet their individual needs.

12. The department has a team of highly qualified and experienced staff, many of whom are of national and international standing within their fields of expertise. In addition the department makes good use of experienced school based practitioners to enhance its centre-based training. There is a developing programme of peer observation and support; continuing professional development is particularly strong. Resources are well managed and very good use is made of limited accommodation.

13. The department's assessment of trainees' performance and progress is rigorous and consistent. An appropriate proportion of assignments are double marked; this includes all those at the borderline/fail grade. In addition, there is regular moderation of the work of all those who assess trainees on school placements and of tutors and school based tutors.

14. The department is proactive in seeking external views on how well it is doing and uses these evaluations well to inform its improvement planning. The views of trainees are influential and are acted upon quickly. Comprehensive and detailed trainee evaluations are very well used to ensure provision meets the needs of individuals and groups of trainees. For example, there was a rapid reaction to trainees' requests for enhanced training in the practical use of ICT in classrooms.

This resulted in improved equipment and a greater focus on school based training. Trainees are well prepared for their first job application.

15. The education department is very successful in its stated aims of encouraging equality, inclusion and citizenship. It fosters community cohesion very well through its innovative work with local schools and is rightly seen as an important member of the local education community.