

# Essex Primary Schools Training Group

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A primary initial teacher training  
short inspection report  
2007/08

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

The Essex Primary Schools training Group (EPSTG) works in partnership with around 22 schools to provide initial teacher training (ITT). It offers a one-year post graduate course with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), for the 5-11 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 24 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 rigorous selection procedures which ensures the recruitment of high calibre trainees
- the effectiveness of the course manager in leading and managing the partnership
- the quality of training delivered in the centre and the partnership schools
- the coherence between the elements of the course
- tasks and assignments that are marked to a high standard and the exemplary second marking of assignments
- the high quality administrative support to the partnership.

## Points for consideration

- revise the construction of the SCITT development plan to ensure that better use is made of individual subject action plans, as well as ensuring it provides a strategic overview identifying clear, overall aims over a longer period of time
- ensure that all trainees consistently receive detailed feedback following lesson observations, which has been referenced carefully to specific Standards and identifies helpful improvement points that have, where appropriate, a subject bias.

## The quality of training

1. The good quality of training has been maintained since the previous inspection and, because of recent changes, it has improved in some aspects. The course is structured well with a good balance between central and school-based training. It meets the Requirements fully. The majority of training takes place in partnership schools that are good training environments.
2. The content of the centre-based training ensures that trainees are fully conversant with all the relevant educational initiatives including the National Curriculum, the Primary National Strategy, the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the Rose Report. The quality of the centre-based training is good overall. This is because the experienced and well qualified local authority advisers and independent consultants provide excellent role models for trainees. Occasionally, centre-based sessions are too tutor dominated and this can impact on their effectiveness. However, as a result of the good training the trainees are motivated and are enthused to become high quality teachers.
3. The cohesion between all parts of the training is good. Clear guidance to tutors emphasises and develops links between the different elements of the centre-based training. Opportunities for trainees to put theory into practice are good. Mentors working in the partnership schools provide good support for trainees during their teaching placements. They build on the centre-based training well to enhance and develop the trainees' understanding of teaching practice.
4. The arrangements for auditing and developing trainees' subject knowledge are secure. The process begins at the selection stage and runs throughout the training programme. Where subject weaknesses are identified, trainees are supported well by course tutors and their school mentors to plan appropriate remediation strategies
5. The procedures for monitoring trainees' progress towards the Standards are good. Trainees often receive detailed feedback following observations of their teaching. In the best examples the feedback is referenced carefully to specific Standards and identifies helpful improvement points that have an appropriate subject bias. However, because this practice is not consistent across the partnership some development opportunities are lost. Overall, tasks and assignments are marked to a high standard; provide useful feedback and model good practice. Nevertheless, in a small number of examples the feedback does not always explain sufficiently how the trainee could have improved their work. In contrast, the quality of the second marking is exemplary. Mentors work closely with trainees to assess how much progress has been achieved towards the Standards. Working together, they record the trainees' development in the progress record which clearly shows how well they are meeting particular Standards. Their judgements are based securely on comprehensive portfolios of evidence that the trainees gather as the course develops.

## Management and quality assurance

6. The partnership has established a strong reputation for the good quality of its teacher training provision with local schools. The partnership's rigorous selection procedures are very successful in selecting those trainees who have the capability to meet the Standards and achieve Qualified Teacher Status. Withdrawal rates are low and the vast majority of trainees enter the teaching profession successfully. The partnership is very committed to promoting equality and diversity and has successfully recruited a number of male trainees to the course. Despite a determined effort, it has been less successful in attracting successful applications from minority ethnic backgrounds, and has not met its targets.

7. Since the last inspection, a new course manager has been appointed who provides strong leadership and who plays a pivotal role in both the strategic and day-to-day management of the programme. Management is very effective because of the good liaison maintained with all partners and because the course manager knows the trainees well. There is good support provided by the head of the lead school and recently appointed lead mentor. The management of the partnership is underpinned by a very clear partnership agreement that is valued by schools. It fully meets requirements and is reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet all partners' needs. It clearly sets out the expectations of all parties, including the benefits of working in partnership. The selection and de-selection criteria are applied rigorously.

8. Communication between the centre, partnership schools and trainees works well and the high quality support from the partnership administrative team is valued by all partners. Trainees have good access to well organised resources, including the opportunity to borrow a notebook computer. The training base library and two training classrooms are equipped to a high standard and provide a good learning environment for the trainees.

9. The monitoring of trainees' progress is carried out very efficiently through the individual progress report form. There are good procedures for the internal moderation of trainees' written work and practical teaching. Since the last inspection the external examiner arrangements have improved. Their reports provide valuable feedback to the course leadership about aspects of the programme.

10. There are some robust arrangements for monitoring the quality of the training programme. There are, however, some inconsistencies across the partnership in the quality of support and feedback for trainees which mean development opportunities are lost.

11. The partnership benchmarks its performance against other similar providers and makes good use of a variety of strategies to evaluate its provision. For example, the responses made by trainees to questionnaires about the training are analysed thoroughly to identify appropriate improvement priorities, which are set out in the improvement plan. The management group monitors the impact of its improvement actions well. However, the current improvement plan is a relatively short-term

document. It looks ahead only to next year and does not set out explicitly what the partnership is aspiring to achieve overall. In addition, it does not include actions linked to the subject action plans, which restricts its overall effectiveness.