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A primary initial teacher training short inspection report 2007/08

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Introduction

Goldsmiths College, University of London, works in partnership with 475 schools to provide primary initial teacher education (ITE) courses. It offers a one-year post graduate programme, which leads to a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). Postgraduate trainees can specialise in a modern foreign language (MFL). At the time of the inspection there were 177 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 strong collegiate leadership
- the well planned content and structure of the training programmes which includes an emphasis on cross-curricular links and provides good progression and cohesion
- the clear values of creativity, diversity and equality which underpin the training
- the emphasis placed upon the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the wider role of the teacher
- the interactive and practical nature of much of the training.

Point for action

- increasing the involvement of schools in the partnership.

Points for consideration

- strengthening the processes, including at selection, for identifying and targeting support to address individual needs, particularly subject knowledge
- ensuring that the Standards are explicitly referenced throughout all elements of the training and that trainees are more rigorously assessed against them in their subject teaching
- improving the consistency of subject action plans so that all have a sharp focus on improving trainees' teaching.

The quality of training

1. The strengths of the training identified in the last inspection have been maintained and added to. Courses have been well planned to meet the Requirements and there is a good balance between centre and school-based elements. Course content is comprehensive and up-to-date. It takes full account of recent initiatives, such as the Rose Review on the teaching of early reading. Courses are broad, balanced and developmental. Sessions are well timed and make good use of trainees' prior learning and school placement experience.
2. There is a very good emphasis on the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the professional role of the teacher. Trainees develop a good understanding of the wider educational context, work effectively with colleagues and establish good partnerships with parents. A particular strength is the way the training highlights the importance of key dimensions such as creativity, the promotion of equality and celebration of diversity. Trainees have good opportunities to explore these themes in-depth through specific modules and they are clearly threaded through all elements of the course. Cross-curricular learning is a strong feature and is embedded throughout the course. A highlight is the week long celebration of 'Carnival' when trainees explore music, poetry, dance and the masquerade.
3. Cohesion between all aspects of the training is good. Strong links are made between theory and practice. Central and school-based tasks relate closely to the taught sessions and enable trainees to apply their learning in school. Aspects such as planning and assessment are explored in lectures and revisited in depth as the course proceeds. Directed activities are well designed to ensure that trainees gain a good range of practical experience.
4. Tutors are well qualified and have recent, relevant teaching experience and research backgrounds. They work well in teams to plan and deliver lively and interesting sessions. Trainees appreciate and respond well to the practical nature of the group seminars and subject-specific sessions when tutors model good primary practice. Through these approaches, the programmes encourage trainees to become reflective and imaginative teachers. Resources are good, both in terms of those available for taught sessions and in the library. Trainees also appreciate being able to use the provider's virtual learning environment to access further course notes and learning materials.
5. Tutors know the trainees' collective and personal needs and aptitudes well. There are regular individual and group tutorials to check progress against targets and extra sessions provided to those requiring additional support. However, the systems for identifying individual subject knowledge needs are not applied consistently and the speed of response in addressing them varies. In all subjects individual needs are identified relatively late. This puts pressure on some trainees to catch up during a very full part of their course.
6. Central and school-based tutors have a clear understanding of their roles and monitor and support trainees' progress towards the Standards very closely during

school placements. They observe trainees teaching regularly and provide them with detailed, formative feedback on their progress. The trainees' weekly diary clarifies the expectations at each stage and supports their own detailed self-assessments and the setting and review of personal targets. Judgements in the end of practice report are agreed between central and school-based tutors using new, clear grade descriptors. These final assessments are closely moderated.

7. Whilst general references are made to the Standards in course handbooks, the links to specific taught sessions, directed tasks and assignments are not always explicit. This restricts trainees' ability to identify and evidence their progress. For example, trainees do not always make it clear in their lesson plans, assignments or subject portfolios how these are providing evidence of their progress towards meeting the Standards.

8. Trainees' progress in reaching the Standards is rigorously assessed and moderated during school placements. However, the lack of rigorous monitoring of directed activities results in missed opportunities to further assess individual trainees' progress, particularly their subject teaching. Assignment feedback is also mainly restricted to points of academic guidance; subject or professional studies feedback is more limited.

Management and quality assurance

9. Leadership and management are good and a strong commitment to the values of creativity, equality and diversity underpins all aspects of the course. Management systems have been strengthened by the establishment of a Head of ITE and Head of Management and Quality Assurance. This has sharpened the clarity of roles and responsibilities and is already resulting in improvements particularly relating to consistency and the quality of self evaluation. The discontinuation of the undergraduate course and the revalidation of the PGCE courses have been used as an opportunity to develop subject and professional studies modules in a more coherent way. This is resulting in good team work and a strong sense of collegiate responsibility.

10. Recruitment materials, including an easily navigated website, provide potential applicants with clear information about the courses, expectations and requirements. There is a good range of recruitment events and activities designed to appeal across the range of potential applicants. Processes to check the expected pre-entry qualifications, safeguarding and health checks are rigorous. School and university colleagues work hard to ensure that interviews are relaxed but rigorous with a good emphasis on equality of opportunity. However, the lack of any other selection tasks results in missed opportunities to identify and swiftly follow up any individual needs, particularly in relation to subject knowledge.

11. Information for successful candidates is detailed with useful activities and reading lists to undertake during pre-course school placements. Trainees,

particularly those who have limited prior experience in schools, find them helpful starting points.

12. Equal opportunities and race equality policies are strong and include specific information about how they impact on selection, recruitment and retention. Policies are carefully monitored and research in these areas is actively encouraged. Pre-application information describes the good range of support which is available for trainees.

13. Partnership arrangements are clear and well communicated to schools. Documentation is comprehensive and explains clearly the roles and expectations of all parties, including trainees. There are regular meetings of the primary partnership development group to oversee arrangements and to discuss issues arising from school placements. However, the partnership group is small and representation from schools is limited. School involvement in the partnership has been a long standing area for improvement and this continues to be the case.

14. Induction and staff development systems are thorough and the strong collegiate approach ensures that centre-based staff plan and evaluate in teams, sharing and developing expertise. School-based colleagues contribute further expertise to central training. Good training opportunities are in place for school-based staff and those who take part evaluate these very positively.

15. Systems to monitor and evaluate overall provision are good and improving, enabling the university to have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. There is increasingly effective and more sharply focused use of a wide range of information, including feedback from trainees and schools, benchmarking data and evaluation of modules. Areas of strength and weakness are correctly identified and action plans put into place to address relative weaknesses. However, the quality of subject improvement plans varies. Some are very effective but others less sharply focused on improving the quality of trainees' teaching. Subject teams do not always identify specific success criteria which link precisely to trainees' subject teaching. Despite these drawbacks, the success of improvement planning can be measured in the high number of trainees assessed as good or very good by the end of the course.