

Somerset SCITT Consortium

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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Somerset SCITT consortium works in partnership with 26 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers postgraduate and professional graduate courses for the 5 to 11 primary age range. At the time of the inspection there were 22 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 (category A) 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

- the consistently high quality training and rigorous assessment of the trainees' progress throughout the partnership
- the well targeted focus on ensuring trainees' individual needs are fully met, including developing their subject knowledge and understanding
- the recruitment and retention of very well qualified trainees and their subsequent development as reflective practitioners, a significant proportion of whom meet the Standards at the highest level
- the strong senior management team who carry out their roles and responsibilities very efficiently and effectively, resulting in excellent levels of communication between the centre and schools
- the outstanding self-evaluation procedures which result in an extremely well focused action plan for improvement
- the schools' commitment to the partnership and the excellent support they provide for trainees
- the carefully differentiated training provided for professional tutors resulting in high quality school-based support for trainees
- the well honed quality assurance procedures and the use of benchmarking information to bring about improvements in the training programme.

Points for consideration

- improving the range of easily accessible books and journals to support the trainees research for their assignments.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is at least good and there are clear indications it has been enhanced since the last inspection. The structure and content of the training programme ensures that all trainees develop a very good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. There is particularly good training in the *Every Child Matters* agenda and a clear focus on inclusive outlooks and practices. The course also comprehensively addresses the impact of initiatives such as the Primary National Strategy, Excellence and Enjoyment and the findings of the Rose Review. The training is very well structured to ensure a suitable balance between central and school-based training. It is carefully phased to enable trainees to gain an understanding of how to approach teaching, learning and assessing pupils' progress in each primary school age group.

2. Cohesion between all aspects of the training is excellent and helps secure the very good progress trainees make towards the Standards. Each core element of the course links very well and guides trainees in developing a knowledge and understanding of how children learn and the structure, principles and content of the curriculum in each individual subject. Tasks are set that enable trainees to apply their learning in class during each school placement, to try out and refine key teaching skills and strategies. Written assignments are well designed to help trainees to draw on wider research and practical experience in order to critically analyse the relationship between theory and practice. For example, the assignment as part of the assessment for learning module requires trainees to carry out action research across two teaching placements on how to assess in a core subject. In this way, the programme encourages trainees to become highly reflective practitioners.

3. The quality of the centre-based training is excellent because the partnership makes full use of highly committed, skilled and enthusiastic trainers, including advanced skills teachers from partnership schools and local authority advisers. Sessions are very well prepared. Trainees particularly appreciate the way in which they are closely involved in all sessions and how tutors model good classroom practice. For example, they model well the use of information and communication technology to make learning more multi-sensory.

4. Very effective support is given to meet trainees' individual needs. Through the recruitment process and an initial on-line audit, trainees are encouraged to reflect upon their awareness of the wider professional role of the teacher. Very thorough audits of subject knowledge are carried out through the training and a range of approaches are available for trainees to address identified gaps in their knowledge. These include additional tutor led workshops, peer support and on line tutorials. Audit findings are shared with both central and school-based tutors and are fed into the highly effective individual training plans. Trainees appreciate how their plans both identify the links between programme elements and outline a developmental approach towards meeting the Standards.

5. The monitoring of trainees' overall progress is rigorous, highly consistent and yields effective formative and summative evaluations that help trainees make more

rapid progress. Central and school-based tutors have a very clear understanding of their roles and monitor and support trainees' progress very closely. Communication within the partnership is excellent and leads to parity of judgements and consistent messages for trainees. Processes are continually improved. For example, the final report form has recently been modified so that the assessment made of their progress towards the Standards is differentiated according to whether the trainee is on placement one, two or three. This enables professional tutors to draw together a more accurate and holistic picture of each trainee's achievements.

6. Assessment systems are thorough and accurate judgements are made. Trainees are encouraged to self-assess and document how they are meeting the Standards. Assignments are well marked and identify the extent to which trainees show critical analysis and organisational skills in their writing. Feedback on trainees' teaching is comprehensive, closely aligned to the Standards and offers clear advice on strengths and areas to improve. This forms the basis for subsequent action plans and related support. Joint observations enable close moderation of judgements and a shared approach between central and school-based tutors.

Management and quality assurance

7. The partnership is successful in recruiting very well-qualified candidates. The retention rate is high and over three quarters of trainees have continued to meet the Standards at the highest level since the last inspection. The partnership is successful in recruiting males into primary teaching but is not so successful in recruiting trainees from minority ethnic groups, despite the high commitment and drive to do so. The website provides helpful and detailed information for prospective candidates; a significant number of trainees commented on this as being a key factor in their desire to investigate the provision further. The recruitment process is very rigorous and fully involves head teachers and tutors from all the partnership schools. The interview tasks are well planned. Effective use is made of the outcomes of the tasks to inform trainees' individual training plans (ITPs). This is a real strength of the provision.

8. Leadership and management are excellent; the two course managers and tutor moderators form a very strong team. They are ably supported by an administration officer who manages the office very efficiently. Communication between schools and the management team is outstanding. Very good use is made of electronic mailing, regular briefing sheets and a termly newsletter to enhance communication further.

9. The committee and management structure is based upon a sound rationale. Lines of accountability are very well defined and well understood. Careful, detailed and accurate minutes of all meetings are maintained. They reflect the in-depth discussions on quality issues and on course review and development. Partnership school staff are consulted regularly and participate in working parties to discuss course developments. All tutors are made aware that they are accountable for the quality of the training.

10. The head teachers and staff of the partnership schools are highly committed to the training programme and meet regularly. This is a key strength. Trainees are placed in good schools which are selected carefully on the basis of their Ofsted reports and the availability of high quality professional tutors. When schools express an interest in joining the partnership, their strengths are audited carefully before they are accepted.

11. The partnership recruits well qualified tutors to deliver the central training element and there is a high level of stability in the retention of tutors. Links with the local authority are also well established and advisory teachers contribute to the delivery of the training. The management team has a very good knowledge of the expertise of staff in partnership schools and is making good use of staff to plan and deliver training. For example, the training for information and communication technology is delivered at a partner school. All partners have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, the training programme is co-ordinated very effectively and links between central training and school-based training are very well developed. The trainees have access to a plentiful supply of teaching and learning resources in their placement schools. However, the range of suitable text books in the centre's library to support trainees is limited, and this is in the process of being addressed.

12. Arrangements for training professional tutors are excellent. Tutors have access to a well planned and differentiated training programme. Their experience is assessed regularly which determines the shape of their training. For example, tutors new to the role are paired with experienced tutors for initial training and ongoing support; this is an exemplary feature, much appreciated by the tutors. The provider arranges alternative training for tutors unable to attend any of the sessions. Training in lesson observation and giving feedback assumes a high profile in all professional tutor training programmes, and this is being extended to include central training for class-based tutors. The tutor and assistant tutor moderators also conduct regular joint lesson observations with professional tutors and these serve as another useful training opportunity.

13. Internal and external moderation arrangements are excellent. Assignments are initially marked by a team of tutors and moderated subsequently by senior course staff in order to ensure consistency of assessment. A sample of assignments is second marked including all borderline passes and fails. The external examiners' reports are detailed and helpful. They confirm the high quality training and particularly the excellent systems for marking assignments and for providing prompt feedback to the trainees. The partnership responds fully to external examiners' reports.

14. The partnership undertakes an extensive evaluation of all elements of the training programme. Trainees and tutors play a full role in evaluating provision. Self evaluation is very thorough and plays an important part in the culture of the partnership. The evaluative detail is outstanding. All initiatives are clearly linked to outcomes and show how improvements to the training have resulted in an increasing

proportion of trainees meeting the Standards at a very high level. Where issues about quality are raised, they are investigated thoroughly and acted upon.

15. The partnership is continually striving to improve and is extremely successful in doing so. The management team has an excellent knowledge and understanding of its strengths and areas for development. There are extensive improvement plans which draw upon the full range of evidence. Links between self evaluation and improvement planning are outstanding and are a key strength of the provision.