

Newman University College

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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Newman University College works in partnership with 98 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers citizenship, English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 203 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: 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 well-designed structure and content of the undergraduate and post-graduate courses
- the innovative and creative content of the courses which extends trainees' understanding of their subject and the wider aspects of teaching
- trainees' excellent access to ICT to support their studies
- the support for trainees' individual needs which contributes to their strong motivation and good retention rates
- the selection process, which ensures that trainees from a very diverse range of backgrounds start the course with great confidence and assurance
- the stability and strength of the partnership, which sustains and enhances the quality of training
- the excellent relationships and outstanding communication between the schools and the university
- the robust systems for identifying trainees or schools that are causing concern and the prompt action taken.

Points for consideration

- give increased emphasis in training to the development of trainees' ability to evaluate the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils' learning
- improve the clarity and challenge of targets set during weekly meetings between trainees and subject mentors.

The quality of training

1. The overall good quality of the training has been maintained since the previous inspection and in many areas, including citizenship and physical education, it has improved.
2. The structure and content of the undergraduate and post-graduate courses are very well designed. Subject development, education and professional studies and school-based training combine well to produce a coherent programme which is successful in producing employable, effective teachers for both the primary and secondary phases. The flexibility within the Key Stage 2/3 course, to choose either a primary or secondary school for a final placement, is particularly helpful in enabling trainees to make informed decisions about their future careers in the different phases of schooling.
3. The content of the courses is regularly reviewed and amended to reflect current curricular issues, including *Every Child Matters*, and ensures that, from the outset, trainees become familiar with the Standards. The courses contain a wide range of well chosen, innovative and creative features to extend trainees' understanding of their subject and the wider aspects of teaching. These include week-long activities in schools focusing on inclusion and creativity in ICT, and the citizenship visit to train teachers in the Gambia. Trainees are highly motivated and enthused by such activities. Assignments completed during the training further stimulate trainees to undertake independent study, to reflect upon their school experiences and to draw upon research evidence. The diagnostic feedback received by trainees on these assignments is helpful in furthering their development.
4. The attention given to meeting trainees' individual needs is a conspicuous strength of the programme. For example, school placements are very carefully chosen to meet individual needs and ensure a balance of experiences. Trainees feel very well supported by their university tutors and this is reflected in their strong motivation and the low withdrawal rate. Tutors respond very quickly to trainees' needs and take effective action to support those who are at risk of failure. Good attention is given to auditing trainees' subject knowledge and to tracking its subsequent development throughout the training. However, in the modern foreign languages course there is too much reliance upon trainees' self assessment, with insufficient moderation of the judgements they make.
5. Trainees' evaluations of their training record a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the university-based training. Tutors are enthusiastic and model good teaching practice. The university-based training is significantly enhanced by organised visits for the trainees to observe good practice in partnership schools and by the contribution of school-based mentors and other external experts to the central programme.
6. Very detailed and useful guidance helps trainees to become competent in planning their lessons. However, the university's recommended lesson plan, although beneficial in the early stages of the training, does not make it easy for trainees to

refine their planning by linking teaching activities to pupils' learning or its assessment. In contrast, a modified approach used in physical education is enabling trainees to produce some excellent lesson plans. Trainees have excellent access to ICT to support their studies and, although still early days, the introduction of a new virtual learning environment is improving their access to resources and providing them with a valuable discussion forum.

7. Trainees' teaching is regularly observed by both their mentors and other teachers and they receive a great deal of helpful feedback. Observers conscientiously complete written evaluations of trainees' lessons. Occasionally, these written observations are too pre-occupied with making references to the achievement of individual Standards with insufficient evaluation of the quality of trainees' teaching. While trainees evaluate their lessons regularly and are open and honest about the shortcomings of their teaching, few evaluate analytically or reflect sufficiently on pupils' learning.

8. Weekly meetings of mentors and trainees are used very effectively to monitor trainees' progress towards the Standards, to plan and review their teaching and to identify targets related to this and to their wider professional development. There are examples of excellent target setting during these meetings but too much is unchallenging or imprecise.

9. The assessment of the trainees is thorough and systematic. Trainees' achievement of the Standards is tracked very closely through university tutorials, weekly mentor meetings during school placements and placement reviews. Mentors' assessment of the trainees is aided by the excellent guidance they receive, including very helpful pen portraits exemplifying grade criteria. External examiners confirm that the arrangements for the assessment at the pass/fail border are secure and that the final assessment of the trainees against the Standards is accurate.

Management and quality assurance

10. The selection process is exceptionally thorough and well organised and results in the successful recruitment of trainees from a very diverse range of backgrounds. The clear sense of reciprocity is a distinctive and highly effective feature of the university's approach: both the university and the candidates are encouraged to select one another, with the families of applicants sometimes participating where appropriate. The university is particularly successful at recruiting trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. The rigorous analyses of basic skills, subject knowledge and interpersonal skills, conducted during the selection process, are used very well to identify specific activities to help individual applicants prepare for the training. As a result of this excellent preparation, trainees start their chosen courses with great confidence and assurance and very few subsequently withdraw from or fail to complete the training.

11. The extensive provision offered by the university is based around an exceptionally strong and stable nucleus of schools and subject departments that

form the bedrock of the partnership. There are clear criteria for the selection of individual schools and subject departments. In the rare cases where schools are unable to provide training of the expected standard, the university takes prompt and effective action, including 'resting' a school or department for some time.

12. The partnership agreement provides a very effective basis for the management and organisation of the training programme. Those involved in the training have a very clear and accurate understanding of their individual responsibilities. There are excellent relationships and a very high level of collaboration between senior managers and tutors at the university and the school-based trainers. Tutors, in particular, know the schools very well and provide very good support, particularly where the school-based trainers are new to their role. The outstanding efficiency of the partnership office, excellent communication between the university and partnership schools and the clarity of the documentation ensures that the school-based trainers understand precisely what is expected of them and that any concerns or queries are resolved very quickly.

13. Partnership schools play an active part in the management and development of the training programme and school-based trainers contribute to the university's provision. For example, some mentors work alongside university tutors as partnership tutors, carrying out mid and end of placement assessments of the trainees in other schools. This is a valuable opportunity that enhances their expertise and strengthens the links between partnership schools. In considering the development of the training, the university regularly consults partnership schools, particularly in relation to any changes in local needs. Recent consultation has focused on the possible demand for a new modern foreign languages route for the Polish community.

14. Most university tutors are highly experienced and very effective teacher trainers. Those who are new receive a comprehensive induction programme and very good support. The arrangement to strategically pair tutors, including for example, the tutors for citizenship and modern foreign languages, is a creative and effective approach to inducting those who are new to role, sharing good practice and raising the quality of subject tutoring to that of the very best.

15. The university provides excellent support for school-based trainers and training for subject and professional mentors is very well planned to meet their individual needs. Mentors' evaluations indicate a high level of satisfaction with the training, although professional mentors would like even more opportunities to meet, particularly to share practice with each other.

16. The culture of continuous improvement identified at the time of the last inspection remains a very strong feature of the provision. Since then there have been very significant changes, including the introduction of new subject courses and modifications to the designated age ranges, new appointments to the university's team and the more recent designation of aspects of the training at masters' level to increase the challenge for the most able trainees. Against this background, the university has maintained the rigour of its quality assurance processes. Systems for

monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, including the promotion of good race relations and equality of opportunity, judged to be highly effective at the time of the last inspection remain so, as do the systems for monitoring and moderating the assessment of trainees.

17. The university has robust systems to identify when the progress of trainees causes concern, and ensures that prompt action is taken to support them in such circumstances. Equally, its systems are able to identify if partner schools are not providing suitable levels of support, for example if they are not being sufficiently rigorous in monitoring the quality of lesson planning, and tackles such situations in an open and timely manner.

18. The evaluation of the training programme is very thorough and informed by feedback from a very wide range of sources, including external examiners, partnership schools, trainees, inspection outcomes and increasingly by the analysis of all available data. Subsequent action planning is of a high standard and forms a secure basis for the continued improvement of the training. However, schools would welcome more feedback from the university to inform their own self-evaluation.