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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

St Mary's University College works in partnership with approximately 150 schools as a member of the South West London Teacher Education Consortium (SWELTEC) to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers postgraduate teacher training in business education, religious education, geography, vocational applied health and social care (AHSC), vocational applied information and communication technology (AICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. It also offers undergraduate three and four year honours degrees with Qualified Teacher Status in physical education. At the time of the inspection there were 241 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 collaborative training partnership with schools
- the effectiveness of the training in meeting trainees' individual needs
- the effective management, which supports good quality training and outcomes
- the thorough evaluation and rigorous quality assurance of provision which promotes good quality training in partner schools.

Points for action

- improving the quality of training for and communication with school trainers, particularly new professional tutors and mentors
- raising the quality of all central training to that of the best.

Points for consideration

- improving consistency in the quality of mentors' target setting for trainees
- improving the effectiveness of training for trainees in how to evaluate their teaching and pupils' learning.

The quality of training

1. Both the undergraduate and postgraduate training programmes are well designed. Since the previous inspection, the restructuring of the post-graduate programme into foundation, developmental and consolidation stages has been particularly effective in creating greater coherence and clear progression.
2. The central professional studies training is carefully planned. Its content is well chosen and, in the postgraduate course, includes a suitably early examination of behaviour and class management issues. Recently introduced sessions on the National Strategies have strengthened trainees' understanding of cross-curricular issues. The SWELTEC documentation maps out the professional studies course very clearly and provides a good basis for schools to create their own programmes which complement the central training. However, the extent to which subject training in schools builds effectively on the professional studies training varies in quality from school to school and across subjects.
3. The content of the central subject courses has been updated to take good account of recent subject developments and in response to evaluations by trainees and school trainers. In science and modern foreign languages, coherence between the central and school-based subject training has improved since the previous inspection. A particularly strong feature of the physical education, mathematics, and vocational courses is the revisiting of key educational issues during the central training programme. The college has developed a range of valuable on-line resources to support all courses though they are used with varying degrees of effectiveness by trainees and school trainers.
4. Trainees benefit from the good range of training expertise among the partnership staff. They feel very well supported by the experienced and well qualified college subject tutors. Visiting lecturers, who contribute to the programmes, bring valuable recent and relevant experience as well as strengthening links with schools. This results in at least good quality central training which trainees rate highly in most subjects. However, in AICT and business education, training in subject pedagogy does not receive as consistently good evaluation from trainees as other subjects. An area for development in the training across all subjects is improving the effectiveness of trainees' evaluation of their teaching and pupils' learning.
5. A high proportion of partnership schools provide a good or better standard of education and this ensures trainees have very valuable school experiences. Most professional tutors secure coherence between central and school-based training. Subject mentors generally support trainees well and provide effective guidance on how to teach their subjects. Trainees' feedback on their school experience is mostly positive and the college works hard to ensure that all trainees receive their training entitlement as specified by the SWELTEC partnership agreement. The quality of the school-based subject training has improved since the last inspection, particularly that provided by mentors, which is now more consistent across the partnership. Subject

tutors visit each trainee regularly during school placements to give additional guidance and aid the training provided by mentors.

6. The attention given to meeting trainees' individual needs is one of the most effective features of the programmes. Nearly all subjects make good use of initial subject and information and communication technology skills audits to devise individual training programmes. These audits are reviewed periodically and, with the profiles completed at the end of each school placement, they are used well to set the agenda for the next stage of training. Trainees' subject knowledge is improved through a variety of mechanisms including valuable subject knowledge enhancement sessions and booster classes. Trainees report that school-based mentors make a particular effort to meet their individual needs as identified in their plans. An effective cause for concern procedure enables a quick response to any difficulties that they might face.

7. Clear procedures exist for monitoring and assessing trainees' progress in meeting the Standards and they are carried out effectively across subjects. Trainees' lessons are observed regularly, and sometimes jointly, by subject tutors, school-based mentors and professional tutors. The formative feedback provided to trainees is helpful and end of placement profiles are detailed, well structured and linked closely to the Standards. However, the quality of improvement targets set by mentors for trainees is variable. Internal and external moderation is undertaken to ensure that the assessment of trainees is rigorous, consistent and accurate. Subject specialist external examiners moderate judgements to ensure the pass/fail borderline is secure. A school experience file provides a comprehensive record of each trainee's evidence for meeting the Standards.

Management and quality assurance

8. The quality of training which was evident at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and in some respects improved through effective management and quality assurance. This is exemplified by the better coherence across the different elements of training, the lower incidence of trainees not receiving their full training entitlement in schools, and the improved quality and consistency of the subject training provided by mentors. Subject courses have also been developed well to ensure they are up to date.

9. Selection procedures are thorough and implemented consistently across all subjects and both routes. As a result, suitable trainees are recruited and the majority retained. The recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups is successful and well-considered strategies support this. All prospective trainees receive clear and helpful information about the training programmes. Applications are scrutinised carefully and interview tasks are designed well to assess trainees' suitability for teaching and their subject knowledge. Interviews are conducted by college subject tutors and often by a partnership school subject teacher. There is particularly good involvement of trainees in the selection procedures for the undergraduate physical

education programme. A very well designed and comprehensive interview form is used to record judgements on candidates; however, its completion is variable in detail and quality. Trainees who accept an offer of a place on the course are set beneficial pre-course tasks which are well matched to their individual needs, particularly in relation to subject knowledge development.

10. The secondary programmes are managed effectively by the course directors to support good quality training and outcomes. A well devised partnership agreement is understood by the majority of those involved in the training. Subject courses are managed efficiently, though the turbulence in the leadership of the AICT course has reduced the effectiveness of its management. A strong training partnership has been created and this is founded on close collaboration with school partners. Professional tutors, through membership of the SWELTEC Strategic Management Group are able to make a contribution to the planning, development and review of provision. However, subject partnerships are underdeveloped due to the limited opportunities for mentors to meet together with St Mary's subject tutors to share good practice and contribute to course development.

11. Well presented SWELTEC and St Mary's specific programme documentation ensures that all trainers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, the training to support school trainers' implementation of this is not consistently good. Professional tutors and subject mentors reported that training is not sufficiently differentiated, does not address the needs of new school-based trainers well and is not always sufficiently subject specific. It is not well attended. This is an aspect of the management of provision that reduces the effectiveness of the improving school-based training.

12. Communication within the college and between SWELTEC central staff is effective and underpins the efficient operation of the partnership. Contact with partner schools is generally good; newsletters from subject tutors are appreciated and schools report very prompt and effective responses from the course director and tutors to their concerns. However, a number of areas of communication are less consistently strong, such as communication with new professional tutors and mentors and contact between subject and professional tutors when the subject tutors visit schools. The deployment of resources is effective in supporting training and provides trainees with a suitable range of teaching and learning facilities and materials. The development of on-line resources is a good example of this.

13. The secondary programmes reflect a strong commitment to implementing the college's policies on equality of opportunity and the promotion of good race relations. However, there is little evidence of formal recording of information on how the college monitors the implementation of these policies in teacher training.

14. College staff share a commitment to continuous improvement and the partnership employs a wide range of strategies to evaluate the quality of the provision. School trainers' views on the quality of provision are gathered through formal evaluations and central meetings. Trainees evaluate both central and school-based training very thoroughly. Subject tutors undertake comprehensive and

effective monitoring and reporting on the quality of school-based training using a well designed proforma. This enables them to gain a secure view on the quality of school-based training and weaknesses are tackled promptly and collaboratively with school trainers. The extensive evaluative information helps to ensure that central managers and trainers have a clear understanding of the partnership's strengths and areas for development. This is thoroughly analysed and presented in the course directors' annual reports on the two secondary programmes. A good feature is that trainees' evaluations are shared openly with schools to assist professional tutors' evaluation of the quality of their work and that of mentors.

15. The various strands of quality assurance result in a well considered whole programme action plan that takes good account of all evaluations and external examiners' and inspection reports. Subject-specific action plans are less comprehensive as they only respond to issues raised by external examiners. The wealth of subject-specific evaluative data collected during the year is not drawn on to produce strategic development plans for subjects that could benefit improvement planning.