

University of Plymouth

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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Plymouth works in partnership with 35 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. At present the faculty of education is based at the university's Exmouth campus, but will relocate to Plymouth in the summer of 2008. The faculty offers training in art and design, citizenship, drama, English, geography, mathematics and music. At the time of the inspection there were 71 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 combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision and of the management and quality assurance arrangements in 2007-08, with the judgements from the scrutiny of further evidence submitted to Ofsted in the summer of 2008.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Main inspection judgements

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the strength of the partnership and high degree of collaboration between university and school-based trainers
- the effectiveness of the training in meeting trainees' individual needs
- the flexible and imaginative management of changes in university staffing which have enhanced the quality of provision
- the comprehensive quality assurance procedures which promote high quality training
- the clear, well organised course procedures and documentation which promote good communication and high quality training
- the effective and carefully monitored selection procedures.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The training programmes have been very well adapted to provide trainees with opportunities to meet the new Standards for Qualified Teacher Status. The course content and structure has been very effectively updated to reflect new initiatives and changing priorities in secondary education. The university has made good use of these changes to streamline and improve course procedures and documentation. For example, the Standards have been brought together in logical clusters for assessing and reporting on trainees' progress. The course is designed to train teachers for the 11–16 age range, but a strong emphasis on post-16 work in all the subject programmes ensures that trainees are well prepared for a broader range of teaching.

2. Individual subject training programmes have also been carefully updated and are skilfully designed to develop trainees' knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching. In English, for example, an early focus on the Key Stage 3 programme of study and subject pedagogy provides a solid base for further training. There is generally a very high degree of coherence between the different elements of the training. In mathematics, subject sessions are not always closely aligned with the topics covered in professional studies and, consequently, opportunities to follow these up are occasionally missed.

3. Recent staff changes have provided opportunities to deploy some able school-based trainers as subject pathway coordinators. The overall quality of training has been greatly enhanced by this constructive blend of recent school experience with the knowledge and expertise of established university staff. Good use of visiting lecturers and partnership teachers enriches the professional studies and subject programmes. The training also builds very effectively on the expertise of trainees. For example, citizenship trainees make a valuable contribution as facilitators in group discussions and art and design trainees lead seminars in their specialist areas.

4. There is a very clear expectation that trainees will be proactive and take ownership of their training. A few find this demanding, particularly in the early stages, but overall it is a considerable strength. The great majority of trainees relish the initial school placement and the opportunities it provides to put into practice what they have learned in the university. In addition this enables them to evaluate their progress against the Standards at an early stage. The high priority placed by the university on developing trainees' self-confidence and resilience, is underpinned by a strong level of support from university staff and mentors in partnership schools. This is matched by the excellent guidance available in course documentation and the very useful virtual learning environment.

5. The course is extremely successful in meeting trainees' individual needs. Comprehensive systems to audit and develop trainees' subject knowledge focus sharply on its application to teaching. School placements are chosen very carefully to match trainees' professional needs and personal circumstances. Flexible timetabling ensures that school placements are well matched to trainees' emerging needs. There

is particularly effective use of this at the end of their first teaching placement enabling trainees to focus on specific areas for development.

6. There are very well designed systems for assessing trainees' progress against the Standards. The close involvement of trainees in the assessment process ensures that they have a very clear and accurate understanding of their progress. Trainees receive frequent, detailed and perceptive feedback on their teaching. Weekly mentor meetings provide valuable opportunities for trainees to discuss and review their progress and set targets for further improvement. Overall this works very well.

7. Arrangements for the final assessment of trainees against the Standards are thorough and understood by all. Internal and external moderation arrangements are rigorous and effective. Particularly good use is made of joint observations for moderation, as well as for mentor training and quality assurance.

Management and quality assurance

8. Highly effective management and quality assurance arrangements have been extremely successful in maintaining the high quality of provision during a period of change and uncertainty since the last inspection. A substantial turnover of university staff, some associated with the imminent relocation of the faculty to the main campus in Plymouth, has been managed flexibly and creatively and in many instances has enhanced the quality of training.

9. Selection procedures are rigorous, comprehensive and set out very clearly in course documentation. Their implementation is monitored carefully by the secondary programme director and a selection of interview records is reviewed annually by pathway coordinators to ensure that judgements are consistent across the various subjects.

10. Recruitment procedures are highly inclusive. The university works hard to recruit trainees from minority ethnic groups and, while these are under-represented in the southwest region, the university has exceeded its own targets in each of the last three years. Where necessary, selection procedures are sensitively adapted to meet the needs of applicants with learning difficulties and disabilities. These well designed recruitment and selection procedures are successful in attracting enthusiastic and articulate trainees with the potential to meet the Standards. Completion rates are high and a substantial number of trainees obtain teaching posts in schools in the southwest.

11. This is a very strong and stable initial teacher training partnership, characterised by a high level of trust and transparency. The willingness of local schools to release knowledgeable and talented teachers to contribute to the university training programmes is a tangible example of the highly collaborative approach. While some schools are concerned that their involvement with the partnership may be affected by the relocation to Plymouth, senior university staff

demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining and extending the existing network of schools.

12. Training programmes are very well organised and effectively managed. Communication between all those involved in the training is excellent: day-to-day concerns and queries are dealt with promptly and effectively. University and school-based trainers demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The induction of new pathway coordinators has been very well managed and effective training and support for new mentors ensures that they quickly adapt to their new roles. Senior managers have successfully implemented a systematic and equitable approach to allocating time to pathway coordinators. This ensures that both full-time university staff and part-time secondees from local schools have sufficient time to manage and develop their subjects.

13. The very close collaboration between schools and the university is underpinned by a strong ethos of mutual respect and trust which permeates quality assurance arrangements. University staff have a clear understanding of the contexts of partnership schools and are alert to significant changes: for example, in subject leadership. The school visits made by university staff routinely involve joint observations of trainees' teaching with subject mentors in addition to checking that all key elements of the training programme are being implemented. Consequently, any weaknesses are quickly identified and effective steps are taken to tackle them.

14. More generally, self-evaluation is rigorous and makes very good use of a wide range of evidence about the quality of provision. External examiners' reports are scrutinised carefully by senior managers to identify any common weaknesses which need to be tackled at a programme level. Trainees' regularly evaluate all the elements of their training, including school placements. The university benchmarks the quality of its work against a carefully chosen set of providers, including a number judged to be outstanding. Comparisons drawn, for example, from the Training and Development Agency for Schools' (TDA) survey of newly qualified teachers are extremely favourable.

15. Self-evaluation informs action planning at both subject and whole programme level and progress is carefully monitored by the secondary partnership committee which includes both university and school-based staff. There is a shared commitment to continuous improvement and areas where there is scope for improvement are tackled promptly and collaboratively. The head of initial teacher education, well supported by the secondary programme director, provides clear and determined leadership. The success of the partnership in continuing to improve the quality of provision against a background of substantial staff changes and imminent relocation to Plymouth is extremely impressive, and demonstrates that there is very good capacity of further improvement.