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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

Sheffield Hallam University works in partnership with over 700 schools to provide primary initial teacher education courses. It offers three-year Bachelor of Arts with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) courses for students wishing to work with three to seven year olds and five to eleven year olds. Postgraduate courses are offered in the same age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 714 students.

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 4

There is insufficient evidence that 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 (ITE) Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the balance between central and school-based training and individual study
- the specific training placements focusing on key areas such as assessment and special educational needs
- the quality of centre-based training, particularly in information and communication technology
- the recruitment, selection and retention of suitable trainees.

Points for action

In order for the partnership to meet the Secretary of State's Requirements for Initial Teacher Training, namely R 2.5 and R 3.5 that requires providers to guarantee that "that their training provision ensures equality of access for all trainees" and that "they monitor and evaluate all aspects of provision and demonstrate how these contribute to securing improvements in quality," the partnership must:

- strengthen the quality assurance of school-based training
- introduce rigorous monitoring of the suitability of schools as training placements
- ensure that there are clear criteria for placing trainees in schools in order to guarantee equality of entitlement

Points for consideration

- strengthening the links between course evaluations and improvement planning
- refining action plans to include success criteria which are more sharply focused upon trainees' progress and attainment of the Standards
- helping class teachers and mentors to take a more active role in subject-specific school-based training
- gaining greater consistency in tutors' monitoring of trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards.

The quality of training

1. The training programmes are well structured. There is a good balance between central and school-based training, and individual study to reinforce the links between theory and practice. However, the overall quality of training is not as good as it should be because the quality of school-based training is inconsistent. At the time of the inspection, a small minority of trainees were placed in schools where Ofsted judged their overall effectiveness to be inadequate. Consequently, these trainees did not have full access to models of good practice within their placement schools. This is an equality of access issue relating to school placements.
2. The partnership uses a wide range of schools in different settings and contexts. Trainees gain experience of teaching across the full age-range for which they are being trained. However, occasionally, they are placed in similar schools on successive placements and this restricts their experience.
3. In university-based training, good attention is paid to giving trainees a firm grounding in the National Curriculum, the Primary National Strategy, the *Early Years Foundation Stage* and current national initiatives, such as the Rose Review into early reading. Trainees are well prepared to teach early literacy skills. The principles of *Every Child Matters* and *Excellence and Enjoyment* are also interwoven effectively through the modules. Training in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning is a strong feature, particularly in science.
4. A further strength is the opportunity for trainees to undertake focused placements on specific aspects such as assessment, special educational needs and creativity. These complement well the training sessions in the university and enable trainees to develop further their knowledge and understanding in school. As a result, they become reflective learners and improve their practice.
5. Well qualified and experienced tutors, supplemented by outside specialists, bring a broad range of expertise to the training programmes. Taught sessions are planned effectively and draw on up-to-date resources. For example, trainees have access to online booklets which incorporate recent articles on primary and early years mathematics. Assignments and school-based tasks are relevant, purposeful and link theory with practice.
6. In the university, there are effective arrangements for identifying trainees' subject knowledge needs. A short subject knowledge audit is completed prior to commencing their training. Good use is made of the outcomes to construct an action plan to address identified weaknesses. Additional help is provided for those who have difficulties through remediation workshops and drop-in sessions. However, trainees do not receive the same level of support in all schools. While school-based

mentors provide helpful tips and guidance on planning and class management, they do not always give sufficient subject-specific advice. Their understanding of their role in subject training is sometimes limited.

7. Academic tutors play a key role in overseeing trainees' individual development. However, the trainees' placement files and records of meetings provide evidence that this role is not being carried out consistently. Some academic tutors and school-based mentors look in detail at the evidence against each Standard and provide the trainee with good guidance about what they need to do to improve. In other cases, the monitoring is less thorough and is too reliant on the trainees' own self assessment. Arrangements for final assessment are clear and well understood by all. Marking of assignments is constructive and supports further learning.

8. There are clear strengths in university-based training but in view of inconsistencies in the provision of school-based training, inspectors judge that the provider is not meeting the Secretary of State's Requirements for Initial Teacher Training, namely R 2.5 "that their training provision ensures equality of access for all trainees."

Management and quality assurance

9. Overall, management and quality assurance are inadequate. This is exemplified by managers' lack of knowledge of the overall effectiveness of schools in the partnership due to weak quality assurance procedures. There are no robust procedures for collecting evidence on the quality of schools and on the training opportunities that they could provide. This leads to inequalities of access to training. Criteria for the de-selection of schools are unclear.

10. The partnership agreement is thorough and outlines roles and responsibilities clearly. A promising recent initiative was the grouping of schools into clusters for training purposes. However, although these provide effective forums to share good practice and areas of concern, attendance at meetings and training sessions is variable. Not all mentors are well prepared for their roles, particularly in subject training. In contrast, there are strengths in the leadership of centre-based training, particularly in English and science, where leaders possess a clear vision for the future and communicate a strong sense of purpose. Resources are appropriate and up-to-date. The development of the interactive partnership portal is beginning to enhance communication between schools and the university.

11. The provider invites trainees, mentors and tutors to evaluate training and holds a wealth of data. However, there are no clear links between course evaluations and improvement planning. There is a tension between the different planning cycles of the university and of the partnership which is unhelpful. For example, the outcomes of reviews in the September of one year are not

incorporated into improvement plans until the April of the following year. In some instances, this represents too long a gap between identifying needs and addressing them. Success criteria are not always well focused upon improving outcomes for trainees.

12. Suitable candidates are recruited. Retention rates are very high. Information for prospective candidates is clear, including the need for high-level qualifications and for students to spend time in school before joining the course. A positive feature is the involvement of partnership school staff in the interviews. The recruitment of underrepresented groups is good and improving, including those from black minority ethnic backgrounds and males.

13. In view of some significant weaknesses in management and quality assurance of school placements, inspectors judge that the provider is not meeting the Secretary of State's Requirements for Initial Teacher Training, namely R 3.5 which requires providers to ensure that "they monitor and evaluate all aspects of provision and demonstrate how these contribute to securing improvements in quality."