

# Nottingham Trent University

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A primary initial teacher training  
short inspection report  
2007/08

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

Nottingham Trent University works in partnership with approximately three hundred schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a four-year BA (Hons) course which prepares trainees to teach pupils in either the primary or early years age ranges, a one year Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE NQF level 6) and a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE NQF level 7) which prepares trainees to teach in the primary age range. At the time of the inspection there were 517 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 4

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

## Key strengths

- the content and structure of the early years training
- the opportunities for trainees to work with pupils outside of the normal school context
- the recruitment and retention of well qualified trainees.

## Points for action

In order for the partnership to meet the Secretary of State's Requirements for initial teacher training, namely R2.2, R 2.3 and R3.5 that requires providers to ensure that "provision is of at least satisfactory quality" 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:

- improve quality assurance by:
  - introducing rigorous monitoring of central and school-based training
  - improving the effectiveness of the senior management team
  - reviewing the committee structure and defining clear lines of accountability
- take prompt action to improve the quality of science training
- achieve better consistency in the quality of school-based training
- improve the effectiveness of the partnership and in particular the arrangements for placing trainees in schools
- ensure that trainees' progress against the Standards is rigorously monitored throughout their training
- adopt a more analytical approach to self evaluation
- set well defined strategic objectives to underpin the action planning process.

## The quality of training

1. With the exception of science, where trainees have expressed considerable dissatisfaction over a number of years, the content and structure of the centre-based taught modules are sound. In English and mathematics, there is a strong emphasis on equipping trainees with a secure knowledge and understanding of the National Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics, the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and of cross curricular links. Despite shortcomings, there is an appropriate focus on investigative science. Information and communication technology is integrated appropriately into the centre-based modules. Assignments and tasks in all subjects are well conceived. The quality of marking is mostly good but is not always prompt.

2. In the professional studies programmes, the inclusion modules are well planned to extend trainees' knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding the achievement of different groups of pupils. Training in early years is well structured to meet trainees' needs with the result that they feel confident working in early years settings. There are appropriate links between professional studies, subject training and practical school experience. A strength is the opportunity for trainees to work with children outside of the normal school context. For example, Year 1 trainees accompany children from Nottingham schools on a residential visit to Anglesey.

3. University tutors are well qualified and keep abreast of current national initiatives. Trainees speak positively about the quality of central training in English and mathematics but not in science. Evidence from the inspection supports their views. The main issue is the organisation of the science training, which is compounded by a lack of good communication between tutors and trainees and weak coordination of the centre-based training programme. This has resulted in trainees in the same year group having different training experiences.

4. Undergraduate and postgraduate trainees have good opportunities to teach across the full age-range for which they are being trained but not all have sufficient opportunities to teach in schools in diverse settings. Consequently, some trainees do not feel secure in supporting pupils with English as an additional language.

5. The quality of school-based training is inconsistent. Subject teams and senior leaders are not sufficiently aware of the weaknesses because quality assurance procedures are poor. Although individual needs appear to be well met in the university through subject auditing and focused feedback on assignments, this represents only a partial picture. Trainees' progress against the Standards is not monitored rigorously enough throughout their training. There is too much variability in the support trainees receive from mentors and in the quality of lesson feedback, mid-term review reports and end-of-placement reports. The setting and review of targets is also inconsistent. There are too many examples of poor practice. The quality of link tutor support is also variable and has been an ongoing concern for a number of years.

6. The inspection team recognised the high level of commitment of course leaders and subject tutors and also the trainees' ability to critically analyse their training in a constructive way. However, in view of the inadequacies in science and in elements of school-based training, inspectors judge that the provider is not meeting the Secretary of State's Requirements for initial teacher training, namely R 2.2 and R 2.5 which requires providers to ensure "that provision is of at least satisfactory quality" and that "their training provision ensures equality of access for all trainees."

## Management and quality assurance

7. Overall, management and quality assurance are inadequate. The leadership and management of primary initial teacher education are in transition following the re-structuring of the school of education in September 2007 and the impact of the recent changes is not yet being reflected in positive outcomes for trainees. There are major staffing issues due to staff absence and considerable movement within subject teams. Both these factors are contributing to inconsistencies in provision. The senior management team is also not working effectively as a team. Although the programme leaders for the PGCE and the BA courses work very hard to ensure that trainees have access to the best possible training in the circumstances, they have a very heavy workload. As a result, they have insufficient time to monitor the quality of training and there is no clear policy to set out expectations of monitoring. Staff acknowledge openly and honestly that there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed.

8. The partnership draws upon a wide range of schools in diverse settings but, because the criteria for placing trainees are not being implemented robustly, not all trainees benefit from this variety of provision. New schools are accepted into the partnership without routinely being vetted first to ensure their suitability. The criteria for selecting and deselecting schools are not well defined.

9. The partnership is increasingly involving partnership schools in delivering centre-based training. The use of the virtual learning portal to aid communication between trainees, the university and schools has also improved since the last inspection. These are good initiatives but have yet to impact positively on outcomes for trainees.

10. There are numerous committees and groups but lines of accountability are unclear. Some committees maintain detailed minutes and agendas but others do not. This makes it difficult to track matters arising from one meeting to the next. The primary strategy partnership group has an important remit to provide strategic direction but, in practice, its business is too task driven. Trainees are well represented on committees and they give useful feedback. Mentors, trainees and link tutors all have opportunities to give formal feedback on the quality of modules and school placements. Not all questionnaires, however, are well designed to provide full and useful information on the strengths and weaknesses of provision.

The outcomes are not routinely discussed at committee level and it is unclear which group takes responsibility for assuring quality. There has been insufficient response to trainees' concerns.

11. New mentors speak warmly of the initial training they receive and throughout the year all mentors have satisfactory opportunities to attend training and briefing sessions. However, their attendance remains an issue. This is a contributory factor to inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring. Recently, helpful level descriptions for Standards have been produced but because some mentors have not attended training, they are continuing to give feedback using an older model.

12. Within the university, informal peer observation of training sessions is encouraged and staff find this helpful. There are plans, too, to introduce more rigorous staff appraisal but it is a while since staff attended appraisal training and there is scope for providing further training in order to ensure that the new arrangements are implemented successfully from the outset.

13. Procedures for the internal moderation of trainees' teaching are being strengthened with the introduction of moderation visits. However, with weaknesses in the quality of lesson observations and in monitoring progress against the Standards, the partnership cannot be sure that assessment is accurate. Although external examiner visits are well established, three examiners did not submit written reports last year.

14. The partnership's self evaluation document is too descriptive and lacks a sharp analysis of strengths and areas for development. It does not provide a firm enough basis for setting strategic objectives, identifying priorities and constructing well focused action plans. Staff agree that there are too many initiatives in progress and that there is a need to prioritise. In contrast, the early years development plan is a well constructed document and presents a good model for other teams to follow.

15. The partnership is successful in recruiting well qualified and motivated trainees. Selection procedures are implemented well and under constant review. Applications are buoyant. The recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups is good and the partnership is working hard to attract more applications from males. Retention rates have improved markedly on the undergraduate course in the last four years. This is largely due to the extra personal support being given to trainees in their first year. Retention on the PGCE course is in line with other providers.

16. In view of significant weaknesses in management and quality assurance, 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."