

The University of Northampton

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A primary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Northampton works in partnership with over 300 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers both postgraduate and undergraduate courses that cover the 3-7 or 5-11 age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 66 postgraduate trainees and 359 undergraduate 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

Quality of training: Grade 1

Management and quality assurance: Grade 1

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

Key strengths

- the outstanding leadership and management
- the outstanding levels of communication, organisation and administration
- the recruitment and retention of high calibre trainees, who, once qualified, remain in the profession
- the effectiveness of the training in meeting trainees' individual needs
- the high level of coherence between the different elements of the training
- the quality of school-based mentoring
- the professional approach of the enthusiastic and committed trainees.

Points for consideration

- ensure school placement target setting focuses not only on professional studies but also on the development of subject knowledge.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. It is very well structured to meet the Requirements. Course content is comprehensive, regularly reviewed and updated by subject tutors. Detailed subject handbooks provide a clear picture of how all work is covered. Explicit reference is made to current educational research and extensive bibliographies effectively guide trainees into further areas of reading and study. Challenging assignments and a good range of directed tasks, including group tasks, provide good opportunities for more focussed work. There is clear reference made to national initiatives, strategies and curriculum guidance. For example, the *Every Child Matters* agenda is covered particularly well and a strong emphasis is placed on 'learning through talk' in science. A wealth of creative and cross-curricular activities is interwoven into the training programme to broaden trainees' understanding of the spiritual and expressive elements of the curriculum. This is especially so in science, drama, expressive arts and humanities. Many aspects of the professional studies course are very effectively integrated within specific subject training. As a result, the training forms a coherent package.

2. The quality of the training has been maintained and in many instances enhanced since the time of the previous inspection. Tutors are highly qualified and effectively model good practice. A strong emphasis on critical reflection gets the best out of trainees. There is excellent collaboration between subject tutors. Teamwork is a strong feature across the training. Tutors work very effectively alongside experienced school based colleagues in aspects of the central training sessions. The quality of school-based training is at least good and is consistent across the partnership. Trainers in schools understand their roles very well and training for those new to the partnership is highly effective in ensuring that procedures are quickly adopted and consistently applied. Schools work hard to ensure placements are successful. Many personal tutors provide very good levels of support and guidance through the oversight of directed tasks, visits and moderation meetings. A virtual learning environment offers the opportunity to share course notes and provides easy access to information and resources.

3. Excellent procedures ensure training meets the individual needs of each trainee. Records of professional development very clearly identify the progress trainees are making towards achieving the standards. Audits are used continuously to ensure subject knowledge is sufficient for the age ranges taught and to identify where additional help is needed. Extension work provides further challenge for more able trainees. The curriculum experience audit ensures that course managers are able to match placements closely to the needs of individual trainees. Target setting is good overall. Targets are specific and support individual action planning well; although the use of these to develop subject knowledge on school placements is less systematic.

4. Comprehensive procedures are implemented well to ensure that progress against the Standards is monitored and assessed very effectively, for example, through regular formal testing in core subjects. Assignments are purposeful and

directly related to placements and best practice in schools. The trainees' records of professional development provide a wealth of evidence for moderation against the Standards. Lesson observations and marking are detailed and explicitly linked to the Standards. End of phase reports, which are shared well with the next placement staff, provide a comprehensive assessment of progress against the Standards for each trainee.

Management and quality assurance

5. The outstanding management and quality assurance have been sustained since the last inspection. There is no sense of complacency here. Further improvements have been made to the overall provision and all points for consideration from the previous inspection report have been fully addressed.

6. The recruitment and selection procedures meet the Requirements very well and enable the university to select high quality trainees. The prospectus and the web site provide potential applicants with detailed information. The university meets its targets for recruiting candidates from minority ethnic groups and has, in recent years, successfully increased applications from men.

7. Interviews are well managed so that the potential of prospective trainees is assessed thoroughly. The tasks provided for candidates are challenging and focus on assessing the range of their academic and interpersonal skills. Headteachers from partnership schools are fully involved in the selection process. Comprehensive records are maintained on the outcomes of each interview and decisions are made in line with the agreed criteria. Unsuccessful candidates receive feedback on why they did not meet the criteria on request. Those who are successful are sent detailed information on the programme, pre-course reading and, where appropriate, personalised tasks to complete. The effectiveness of the selection process and the training is reflected in the good retention rates and proportion of trainees achieving high quality outcomes.

8. The visionary and extremely capable management team ensures that trainees are very well prepared to teach. Senior managers have successfully built a vibrant training partnership founded on openness and trust. Communications throughout the partnership are excellent. The professional ethos established by senior managers promotes a culture of continuous improvement and contributes very well to positive outcomes for trainees.

9. Roles and responsibilities within the partnership are clear. The steering group, which maintains the strategic overview, comprises a range of personnel including head teachers, mentors, tutors and university senior managers. Trainees are represented on the boards of study. This ensures that all stakeholders are involved and kept informed of developments. The very high level of commitment of all partners is reflected in their regular attendance and participation at all meetings and in their active involvement in the school-based training.

10. Underpinning the management of the partnership is a very clear partnership agreement which is reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet all partners' needs. The administration of the partnership is outstanding and all minutes are very well documented, with clear action points that are agreed and followed up. The provider has very well organised training sessions for school-based ITT co-ordinators, who subsequently cascade training to all school mentors. Recent training has included target setting and the Standards.

11. All new university members of staff undergo a sustained induction programme which includes the allocation of a mentor, quarterly progress review and formal observation of teaching by the associate dean who has responsibility for quality. Moderation processes are robust and ensure consistency in judgements on trainees' teaching, as well as on trainees' files and lesson observation notes. There are regular joint observations of trainees involving mentors, headteachers, subject specialists and university tutors as well as cross-moderation meetings by school-based staff visiting other schools. External examiners report positively on the rigorous assessment procedures.

12. Quality assurance procedures are outstanding. The annual review process is the key quality assurance mechanism involving an analysis of resourcing, recruitment and retention, taught modules, school placements, trainee attainment and progression and external examiners' reports. It also takes account of the Training and Development Agency for Schools performance profiles and the newly qualified teachers' survey in order to confirm strengths and identify areas for development in the national context. This comprehensive document enables the university to devise excellent improvement plans which focus on past, present and future developments and on the impact these have on the standards the trainees attain.