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A primary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Gloucestershire works in partnership with 250 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers three-year undergraduate Primary and Early Years programmes, leading to a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree and a one-year post graduate programme, which leads to a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). Two PGCE courses are provided, one based at Cheltenham, the other at the Urban Learning Foundation in London. At the time of the inspection there were 486 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 collegiate approach to management
- the positive manner in which individuals are supported and their contributions valued
- the well planned courses which provide good progression and cohesion and include an emphasis on cross curricular links
- the high quality of feedback on assignments
- the very good communication across the partnership.

Points for consideration

- ensuring that success criteria in action plans are focused on improving outcomes for trainees
- improving the use of school-based tasks and lesson observation feedback to develop trainees' subject specific skills and monitor their learning
- further improving the rates of retention, particularly on the Primary BEd course.

The quality of training

1. The good quality of training has been maintained. The structure and the content of the training programmes meet the Requirements well and enable trainees to meet the Standards.
2. The courses in professional studies, core and Foundation subjects are progressive; coherence between these elements is a strength. The professional studies modules cover key issues in teaching and learning at a theoretical and practical level, which are effectively followed up in subject sessions. There are very good links between the foundation subjects, professional studies and the core subjects with a cross curricular emphasis. A good balance is achieved between good subject knowledge and its application in learning and teaching. Courses are highly relevant to current practice in schools and cover important aspects such as the *Every Child Matters*.
3. Well chosen placements allow sufficient opportunities for trainees to gain a good breadth of practical experience. The pattern of placements allows trainees to get to know schools well and to observe and teach in different classes, and in schools in different socio-economic circumstances. The centre-based modules prepare for and build on trainees' school experiences well. Sessions in English and professional studies, for example, make good use of school-based tasks which are used as case studies in central training. The detail in some school-based tasks in mathematics and science is not as clear as it could be, with the result that opportunities for learning and reflection are not fully maximised.
4. University trainers are well qualified: they have recent, relevant primary school experience and some are engaged in current classroom research. Good use is made of staff from partnership schools to deliver sessions. Teaching methods used in the central training model effective classroom practice in the use of information and communication technology and the mix of different teaching and learning styles. Trainees' evaluations of modules confirm that they welcome the lively, interactive approach of their tutors and the opportunities for practical work.
5. The quality of school-based training is good. School-based mentors are conscientious in managing trainees' classroom experiences and in tracking their progress in meeting the Standards. Good quality documentation helps to structure the work of trainees and school-based mentors. Trainees' good progress in meeting the Standards in class management reflects the good support and guidance of teachers, school-based mentors and link tutors.
6. Support for trainees is a particular strength of the provision. Trainers and trainees know each other well. Trainees who are experiencing difficulties in school or at the university are supported sensitively. The English team, for example, provides excellent support for individuals in developing their oral and written English, and the mathematics and science teams ensure trainees have access to well structured support. Personal tutors meet regularly with trainees to guide them in evaluating

their progress. The on-line, virtual learning environment is easy to access and is a good means of communication between staff and trainees.

7. There are secure mechanisms to assess trainees' achievement against the Standards. Structured observation records and weekly reviews combine well to give a good overall view of the trainees' progress. Trainees receive much constructive feedback on their skills in planning lessons and in managing the pupils, but less on how well they have taught the subject content of the lesson.

8. Trainees' achievement of the Standards relating to subject knowledge is assessed well. The initial subject audit which the trainees complete in English is an example of very good practice, and tracks their progress in developing and strengthening their subject knowledge very well. The assessment of the trainees is well moderated and externally validated. The module documentation lays out clearly the assessment criteria but does not always show how the completion of assignments will contribute evidence to fulfilling specific Standards. Assignments are thoroughly marked, annotated with constructive, challenging feedback and guidance is given to the trainees on how to make improvements. For example, guidance is provided on the master's level for the postgraduate trainees, as well as at a pass level.

Management and quality assurance

9. Significant improvements have been made in leadership and management since the last inspection and these are now good. The commitment to valuing the contributions of all members of the partnership results in strong collaborative working. Professional development groups and the newly expanded primary partnership group demonstrate strong commitment to improvement and engage in high quality professional discussion and decision making. The teams feel valued, empowered to make changes, and have a clear overview of what improvements have been made and what the next steps need to be. Management has been strengthened by the appointment of new members of staff.

10. The management of recruitment and selection is much improved. Processes to check the expected pre-entry qualifications, safeguarding and health checks are rigorous. Interviewing arrangements have been thoroughly overhauled. These now include a good range of activities to effectively evaluate trainees' skills, attitudes and abilities. Interviews involve school and university colleagues working in pairs and this increases consistency and ensures moderation. Interviewers are well briefed to ensure well focused interviews with a good emphasis on equality of opportunity. Good feedback is provided with suggested activities and reading for trainees to undertake prior to starting the course.

11. Recruitment, particularly to the PGCE programmes, is buoyant and the university is attracting increasing numbers of well qualified applicants. Retention is improving and is now good in the PGCE and early years courses. There has been good targeted support activity such as the 'boys club' which provides specific support for male trainees. Despite this good work, recruitment from under- represented groups and retention in the Key Stage 1 and 2 BEd course remains a concern.

12. Partnership arrangements are clear and communication between schools and the centre is very good. Partnership coordinators are highly regarded for their good knowledge of the schools, understanding of the requirements and prompt attention to queries. The university has widened the participation and extended the purpose and value of the partnership group. As a result this group is increasingly influential and provides a forum for good liaison between the various partners. It has reviewed and improved aspects of the courses including timing of placements, documentation and the revised partnership agreement. The various roles and responsibilities are clearly explained and well understood.

13. Induction and staff development systems are thorough and the strong collegiate approach ensures that centre-based staff plan and evaluate in teams, sharing and developing expertise. Tutors have a good range of expertise and teams are well balanced with some very experienced in ITT and others with recent experience in schools. Mentor training is of good quality; take up is high and very positively evaluated. Reasons for non-attendance are rigorously checked and followed up. Pre-placement meetings are well attended by mentors and link tutors and used effectively to ensure that all partners receive the same information.

14. Systems for assessing progress during school placements are thorough and include joint observations and post placement moderation meetings to ensure consistency. Moderation systems are robust, resulting in the rigorous and consistent assessment of progress and achievement.

15. There are clear lines of accountability, monitoring and evaluation and the systems to ensure quality assurance are good. Systems to monitor and evaluate overall provision are improving and recent changes ensure that a wider group of tutors and partnership colleagues are more closely involved in evaluation. This is resulting in greater transparency and better understanding of the bigger picture. A wide range of information is used to inform evaluation and improvement planning and the university is actively seeking to further improve the usefulness and impact of feedback. Benchmarking data are beginning to be used although this is still at an early stage of development.

16. Most action plans are good and comprise overarching strategic plans supported by course and subject plans. Plans follow a consistent and useful format. Subject and programme development planning varies in the sharpness of focus on outcomes in terms of impact on trainees' teaching. There are some very good examples where explicit links are being made between course improvements and trainees' teaching but generally subject teams do not always identify specific success criteria which link precisely to trainees' subject teaching.