

University of Plymouth

Faculty of Education
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A primary initial teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Plymouth works in partnership with 234 primary schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers four year undergraduate Primary and Early Years programmes, leading to a Bachelor of Education (BEd) Honours degree with Qualified Teacher Status and a one year postgraduate programme in primary or early years, which leads to a Professional Graduate Certificate of Education. At the time of the inspection there were 703 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 February 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 ITE Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the high standard of leadership and management at all levels
- the well constructed and cohesive courses which result in very good quality training
- the extensive care and support for trainees which encourages self-analysis and personal responsibility
- the rigorous recruitment and selection procedures
- the commitment and enthusiasm of tutorial staff
- the very good quality mentor training and the matching of trainees to suitable schools
- the detailed and effective assessment systems which underpin all aspects of the training and which progressively challenge and accurately judge trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards
- the excellent communication between all members of the partnership.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. It is very effective because it enables trainees quickly to develop a good understanding of the National Curriculum and Guidance for the Foundation Stage. They can increasingly use and apply that understanding in their own practice.
2. The courses are carefully and imaginatively designed to ensure very good cohesion between all elements of the central and school-based training. This coherence helps trainees develop a clear understanding of the relationship between subject teaching and aspects such as the *Every Child Matters* agenda, English as an additional language and cross curricular strands. Professional studies elements are threaded throughout the courses and there is a strong emphasis on practical, activity based learning and assessment for learning. There is a good balance of written assignments, practical activities, seminars, and trainee presentations. Extensive use of off-site activities, well developed international links and opportunities to experience education in a range of settings further develops a very good understanding of educational issues in the wider world.
3. Tutors with wide ranging experience and a passion for primary teaching model good practice in their training. Trainees are encouraged to be active and responsible learners, enjoying learning while receiving a thorough grounding in the subjects and also developing professional skills. High quality school-based training makes a valuable contribution to the taught programme. In addition, the newly instigated 'hub' system, in which clusters of schools share best practice, is enhancing school-based training still further.
4. Support for trainees' individual needs is a strength of the provision. Tutors provide excellent personalised care and challenge to help trainees achieve their full potential. Those who need additional individual help are well supported through the tutor system and through referral to Student Support Services. Subject knowledge is audited very carefully. Those with specific expertise, for example more able mathematicians, work alongside tutors to lead support sessions for their peers. As a result, trainees develop high levels of confidence, critical self-awareness and the ability to set suitable targets and identify their next steps.
5. Trainees' practical teaching is closely monitored, assessed and rigorously moderated. Professional development profiles, including the ongoing school experience records and report forms, provide a comprehensive record of how well trainees are progressing towards the Standards and what they need to do to improve. Lesson observations are detailed and usefully record achievements against the Standards. However, feedback does not always focus sufficiently on pupils' progress.
6. Trainees carefully evaluate and assess their own progress towards meeting the Standards. Peer assessments of directed activities represent a valuable extra

dimension to assessment practice and enable trainees to begin to act as critical assessors and to learn from one another.

Management and quality assurance

7. The partnership has a very effective recruitment and selection policy and well organised procedures which successfully identify high quality trainees. Most complete their training with good grades and the numbers who withdraw from the postgraduate or undergraduate courses are small.
8. The selection and interview process is thorough. It includes well designed assessments of applicants' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills as well as thoroughly investigating their suitability to be primary school teachers. Systems for checking and recording applicants' qualifications and fitness to teach are rigorous. University and partnership school staff are very well trained as interviewers and a strength is the rigorous moderation process that takes place at the end of each interview day, which ensures that judgements are fair and consistent. Interviewers are meticulous in recording the reasons for their judgements and applicants' strengths and weaknesses. This information provides useful feedback to candidates, identifies individualised pre-course preparation and informs the planning of trainees' induction onto the courses. As a result, trainees are very well prepared to begin their training.
9. Inclusion and equal opportunities are central to the work of the university and considerable efforts are made to attract trainees from minority ethnic and other under-represented groups. As a result there has been an increase in the percentage of trainees from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and male trainees on the BEd programme. The progress of trainees from these and other groups is closely monitored from application to graduation and very good levels of appropriate support are provided when necessary.
10. The leadership and management of the provision are outstanding at all levels. There are well designed committee structures which ensure good participation by schools. The primary partnership committee has had a particularly significant impact on improving the provision, for example by reviewing and improving the school experience guidance and proformas. University and school partners work well together to ensure that training is well planned and co-ordinated and that high standards of strategic planning result in positive and proactive developments in training.
11. Communication within the partnership is excellent and issues and problems are addressed promptly and appropriately. The partnership agreements for both associate and teaching schools are very well designed and applied. Detailed and up-to-date information is recorded about each partnership school and this is used very well to ensure trainees are appropriately matched to placements.

12. Central and school-based trainers are very well trained and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Procedures to monitor and support new and experienced tutors are very effective and rigorously applied. Mentor training is a particular strength because the training materials are detailed, up to date and of a high standard. Comprehensive records are kept regarding attendance at mentor training events and absences are rigorously followed up. This means that all trainees are supported by well trained staff on their school placements. Written guidance to support school-based training is detailed, clear and well designed.

13. Both postgraduate and undergraduate courses are closely monitored at all stages of the training. Detailed and comprehensive evaluation data are collected from trainees, partnership schools, tutors and external examiners and these are used to inform the ongoing, as well as strategic, development of the training. A range of effective strategies are well established to ensure that the assessment of trainees is fair, rigorous and consistent. A suitable range of assignments are double marked. The regular joint observations and meticulous moderation meetings ensure that all judgements about the quality of trainees' teaching and their progress towards meeting the Standards are secure and accurate. Judgements at the pass/fail borderline are equally secure.

Improvement planning at subject and programme level is very effective. There is a clear and common approach towards the development of action plans, which are well informed by a range of data and clear strategic planning to identify suitable priorities. Although in some subject plans success criteria are not easily measurable, the programme managers have extensive data which demonstrate the effective impact of their improvement planning on outcomes for trainees.