

University of Warwick

Institute of Education
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A primary initial teacher training
inspection report

2007/08

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Introduction

The University of Warwick works in partnership with 150 schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. The university offers a full time post graduate course in Early Years (3-7) and in Primary Education (5-11). At the time of the inspection there were 155 trainees. The undergraduate programme has not been offered since 2004 and the final cohort of trainees completed their training in 2007.

Context

The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors in accordance with the *Ofsted Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training (2005-2011)*.

This revised report combines the judgements from a short inspection of the provision in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements in 2007/2008, with the judgements from the scrutiny of further evidence submitted to Ofsted in the autumn of 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

Standards: Grade 1

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 strong partnership with a wide range of educational settings
- the high quality of training, especially at the centre
- the high level of consistency in procedures, practice and professionalism
- the innovative use of information and communications technology (ICT)
- the strong focus on improvement through constant review and regular consultation of all in the partnership
- the transparency of decision making about provision
- the effective selection of trainees who rise to the challenge of becoming reflective practitioners.

Points for consideration

- refining procedures to quality assure the work of link tutors and share best practice across the partnership
- sharpening targets so that those specified in programme development planning can be better evaluated.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. It is very well designed to meet the Requirements. Trainees teach in at least two key stages, with those on the early years' course spending additional time in a nursery or children's centre and those on the primary course visiting Year 7 and the Foundation Stage. Courses have a good balance between centre and school based training with well timed modules and assignments to link both. Sessions at the centre lead into, and build on, trainees' experiences in schools with an increase in challenge and development of skills. Since the last inspection, a revamp of the provision in foundation subjects has increased coherence while retaining discrete teaching by specialists. Training in early reading has improved significantly and is rated highly by newly qualified teachers.

2. The professional studies programme drives the content of the course. Trainees receive up to date information from specialists on themes such as talk for learning, which is carried through into subject content. In science, for example, there is a strong emphasis on talk as part of investigation. National curricular guidance, initiatives and reports, including the Rose Review, are well embedded. The programme is planned very well, dynamic and flexible, with many experiences that trainees find rewarding and exciting. A creativity week, similar to some schools' thematic weeks, provides experiences that contribute to a number of Standards and interlink aspects of professional studies and subject modules. Directed tasks are interwoven into the training programme to inform and revisit topics. Good examples include those to assess children's progress, and those that guide trainees' time in partnership schools where there is effective practice in meeting the needs of children who have English as an additional language. The strong emphasis on asking for trainees' opinions fosters well-founded personal philosophies of education and extends the trainees' ability to reflect critically on centre and school based experience.

3. The very good provision in ICT, and its innovative part in centre based training, enhances trainees' understanding of the potential of ICT to promote pupils' learning and increases their own proficiency in its use. The well equipped technology centre and library provide excellent venues for trainees to study and develop their competence in using multi-media technology. Staff in schools appreciate the high levels of expertise in ICT that the trainees bring to their teaching.

4. Centre based training is of high quality. Trainers are well qualified; several have a national reputation in their field. They provide outstanding role models and constantly model good practice. Their enthusiasm, continuous challenge and willingness to give of their time inspire and encourage trainees to be successful. Sessions are planned meticulously with opportunities for the more able trainees to extend their thinking. Those trainees who need help in writing assignments or who have gaps in their knowledge receive full support to improve.

5. The development of subject knowledge is a strong element of both centre and school based training. Audits of trainees' knowledge are supplemented in

schools by observation of experienced practitioners and practical tasks which place the knowledge in context. Personalised learning is therefore a strong feature of the programme. Trainees are involved fully in monitoring their own progress. They have a very clear picture of their academic and professional performance through their own evaluations and from thorough feedback on assignments, tasks, placements and seminars. Trainees meet regularly with their personal tutors to discuss how well targets are being met. This leads smoothly and successfully into the agreement of targets for continuing professional development.

6. Partnership schools are effective venues for training. Headteachers and mentors value highly the ongoing relationship with link tutors and their support, particularly when grading performance, or if a trainee is giving cause for concern. Mentors and class teachers support trainees very well. Observations of trainees' teaching are structured by exemplary forms and guidance. Trainees receive clear indications of how their teaching met the Standards, detailed feedback on the effectiveness of the lesson and helpful advice on how to improve. Mentors' reports, which are passed on to the next school, are a comprehensive record of trainees' progress. Targets set for the next placement do not always make clear exactly what will count as success in meeting them.

Management and quality assurance

7. The recruitment, selection and retention of trainees are excellent. The prospectus and website provide very clear information about the content of the courses, entry requirements and selection procedures. Initiatives, including men into teaching events and the student associate scheme, are having a positive impact on the number of applications from under-represented groups. Applicants selected for interview receive detailed information on what to expect, especially the assessments in mathematics and English, and how the required time in school will inform discussions. Help is readily available to organise a placement in a partnership school, for those who need it, and to prepare for the interview. Trainees appreciate the rigour of the selection process, particularly participation in group and individual interviews with staff from the university and from partnership schools. Interviewers receive detailed guidance on the criteria for selection. The process is well structured to assess candidates' suitability for teaching and their ability to reflect critically on their experiences. Unsuccessful candidates receive clear feedback. Those offered a place receive comprehensive information on how to prepare for the course, and the necessary steps to gain clearance to work with children. Information about individual needs is shared with trainers before the course.

8. The partnership has evolved and strengthened considerably since the last inspection. A good number of schools have opted to be sole partners with the university because of the clarity of what is expected, the high quality of support and the valued training for mentors and class teachers. The partnership agreement lists clearly the criteria to be met and the commitments expected of all in the partnership.

9. Documentation for schools is excellent. The introduction of a placement calendar has been an effective step in resolving previous misunderstandings. Placement booklets, revised in consultation with schools, are comprehensive workbooks which lay out all that trainers require to manage, assess and record trainees' progress. Link tutors and mentors have worked together productively to compile and introduce grade descriptors to judge trainees' performance. Training events, including the annual conference, keep school and centre based trainers updated on changes to documentation, programme content and national issues. They also provide an opportunity to discuss possible ways forward for the partnership, such as paired placements and involvement in funded research projects. All trainers take their responsibilities seriously and are clear about the procedures to follow when a concern is raised about a trainees' performance. Link tutors play a key role in moderating mentors' judgements and in deciding the best placement to meet a trainee's needs but there is variability in the quality of their work. Best practice is not shared effectively.

10. Management and quality assurance systems are well established and are highly effective. Trainees, managers and trainers from the centre and partnership schools are all well represented on committees, whether the function is to steer or to evaluate the provision. Professionalism, commitment and a focus on constantly seeking to improve are tangible. Trainers and trainees play an equal part in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of systems and course content, and in considering the options for change. Decision making is transparent. Minutes and reports track a thorough process of ongoing review and subsequent action, with the partnership moderation group playing an objective role in evaluating the impact.

11. The partnership has an accurate view of its effectiveness and how well it compares with other providers. Development planning is integral to the programme and draws on a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information. The appointment of a data manager has added impetus to the collation and analysis of evaluations, and trainers are using information on facets of provision to adjust content for current trainees and for the following year and beyond. Planning is closely linked to outcomes for trainees but some targets lack sufficient specificity to ensure critical evaluation.