

# Brunel University

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A secondary initial teacher training  
short inspection report  
2007/08

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

Brunel University works in partnership with 62 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a full-time Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in English, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science and a part-time PGCE in English, mathematics and science. It also offers a four year Bachelor of Science (BSc) course with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in physical education. At the time of the inspection there were 107 trainees on the PGCE course. Brunel University operates in partnership with three other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as part of the South West London Teacher Education Consortium (SWELTEC).

## 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 ITE Inspection Framework.

## Key strengths

- the responsiveness of managers at all levels and the good levels of communication they promote
- the quality of the leadership and management of courses by the subject leaders and the significant impact they have on the central training
- the effective links made between research and classroom practice by subject tutors and trainees
- the high level of personalised support trainees receive
- the coherence and structure of the central training
- the quality of feedback to trainees provided by central and school-based trainers.

## Points for action

- ensuring that a clear strategic plan for improvement for the programme is put in place based on rigorous review and analysis of the wide range of data available
- ensuring that monitoring of school-based provision is organised and recorded systematically to provide managers with an up-to-date picture of that provision.

## Points for consideration

- involving school-based tutors more in trainees' subject knowledge development
- providing more guidance on judging levels of progress for school-based trainers.

## The quality of training

1. The courses are well structured. The initial block of university time on the PGCE course is particularly well used to enable trainees to gain a good introduction to classroom teaching. In addition, there are extended curriculum opportunities, such as the wide range of cultural visits undertaken by the English cohort. The primary placement during this time is also well used to develop trainees' understanding of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Subject programmes are well designed and trainees are well prepared to meet the Standards. All courses have been responsive to recent changes. Placements are carefully thought out to provide trainees with complementary experiences, with the diverse nature of the schools being exploited particularly well to provide a real breadth of experience.

2. The coherence between the different elements of the courses is good, with clear links between the professional studies sessions and subject sessions. The useful set of school-based tasks and school-based professional studies training further aid coherence. However school-based trainers do not always have a sufficient knowledge of the content of the subject sessions to enable them to exploit them fully in the school context.

3. Trainees respond well to the way the central trainers model good classroom practice. The quality of the central training is also enhanced by the use of external speakers as well as by the way tutors draw on their research and areas of expertise. A strength of the courses is the use made by trainees of their own reading and research. Assignments are well timed and allow trainees to focus in depth on particular aspects of methodology.

4. School-based trainers plan training carefully. Schools make good use of the SWELTEC documentation to direct the work in the mentor sessions. Trainees are well supported by the mentoring they receive. They develop a good grounding in planning and teaching methods. Their lesson planning identifies clear objectives and is generally detailed.

5. Trainees are given a good level of personalised support. Subject tutors use their good knowledge of the trainees' prior experience well to ensure training programmes are personalised and placements are suitably tailored to trainees' needs. Subject enhancement is thorough in most subjects, with attendance at booster and enhancement courses being made a condition of acceptance for a significant numbers of trainees. Throughout the year subject tutors build in opportunities for trainees to develop subject knowledge further. Science trainees deepen their knowledge and understanding of physics during a weekend course. ICT trainees lead seminars for their peers in their areas of expertise. However, not all subjects utilise the wealth of experience in schools to extend subject knowledge development beyond the remit of the classes trainees are timetabled to teach.

6. Trainees receive regular and detailed feedback on their teaching: the systems of written feedback and the weekly mentor meetings provide good

opportunities for trainees to evaluate their progress and set targets for improvement. Targets at the end of placements are particularly effective in setting the priorities for the next stage of their training. All trainers are confident and accurate when assessing against the Standards. School-based trainers and trainees are less clear about what constitutes evidence for the portfolios. Not all school-based tutors are confident about making judgements about the level of progress made by trainees as there is no clear exemplification of the grading system.

## Management and quality assurance

7. The partnership has responded well to the fall in recruitment in some subjects and has been creative in the range of strategies it has employed to market the courses more widely. The increased pre-application work carried out by subject tutors has resulted in better quality applications. The university is committed to diversity and the percentage of trainees recruited from minority ethnic groups is high overall.

8. The interview process is rigorous, but also flexible enough to allow for appropriate subject difference. In modern languages trainees' linguistic competence is probed in both first and second foreign languages. The selection in physical education is particularly rigorous in the way it assesses not just the professional and personal but also the trainees' physical capabilities. The move to grouped interview days has ensured greater collaboration between different subjects and opportunities for moderation. There is a drive to have greater involvement of partnership schools but this is not yet happening in a planned and consistent way. Systems for checking applicants' fitness for practice are rigorous; checks are carefully carried out and records are well maintained and regularly reviewed. The whole selection process results in the recruitment of good quality trainees.

9. Communication between members of the partnership is good and there is a strong commitment to the course by all members of the partnership. Managers at all levels are very responsive to emerging issues and in dealing with necessary curriculum development. The secondary partnership management group includes good representation from schools and is equally responsive. It is less effective in setting a clear strategic agenda and in driving forward the improvement planning process.

10. Subjects are well led and subject leaders show a commitment to improving training. There is a strong collegiate approach and subject leaders are keen to share good practice. This is well exemplified in the peer review of teaching in mathematics where colleagues' reciprocal analysis of practice is insightful and provides critical support.

11. School-based trainers are committed to developing good teachers. The increased training for professional co-ordinating tutors has resulted in them taking a more active role in the professional development of mentors. Their role in

monitoring the quality of the school-based provision is still not fully developed and tends to be through discussion with trainees rather than via a systematic programme of monitoring. This element of the point for consideration from the last report has been less efficiently addressed. The partnership development schools cluster in Buckinghamshire has been successful in increasing the number of mathematics and science placements and in improving the quality of mentoring through networking and training.

12. There are effective systems in place for subject leaders and tutors to monitor the work of schools. These visits are well documented but there is, as yet, no efficient system for maintaining an overview at course level of the quality of the school-based provision. The partnership is aware of this and is developing a data base which will allow them to monitor the work of schools more effectively.

13. There are good systems in place to monitor and moderate assessment and external moderation corroborates that the pass/fail borderline is secure. Joint observation of trainees' teaching ensures that new mentors' judgments are secure. Joint observation is also used well when trainees are experiencing difficulties and are a cause for concern.

14. The partnership evaluates provision regularly and elicits the views of trainees and mentors well, both formally and informally. It also has access to a range of other data and to the external perspective of the external examiners. This range of data is used well in annual reviews to evaluate the provision for that year. These reviews do not, however, either at subject or course level, lead to strategic and systematic planning for improvement. There are development plans which have arisen from co-ordinated cross-subject approach. These plans identify appropriate actions and show broadly what needs to be improved. They do not link closely enough to the annual reviews and the sources of evaluation and success criteria are not sufficiently strongly linked to trainees' outcomes or the impact on trainees' teaching.