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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Oxford works in partnership with 29 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training courses. It offers a full-time Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. Religious education is a new subject, introduced for the 2007/08 academic year. All courses provide training to teach across the 11-18 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 187 trainees on the course.

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 1

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 quality of all university-based training
- the strength and coherence of the partnership
- the highly effective selection arrangements
- leadership and management in the university, the quality of partnership and the research-based approach to course development
- the coherence between the elements of the course, including the contribution of the assignments
- the highly effective tutor visits to schools
- the high levels of intellectual rigour that permeate all aspects of the course
- the focus on personalised learning for trainees and the care and support they are given.

Point for consideration

- undertaking a review of the indicators of progression to better reflect trainees' achievements in the final school placement.

The quality of training

1. The very high quality of the training has been maintained, as clearly indicated by the progress that trainees make. The university sets high expectations for the quality of trainees' work, and the very large majority achieve these. A particularly strong feature is the level of trainees' critical evaluation and reflection in all aspects of their work. This is demonstrated, for example, through their reviews of their teaching and through their assignments. The assignments are excellent and make a highly significant contribution to trainees' progress. They indicate clearly the high levels of intellectual and analytical skills required by the course, as well as being firmly rooted in the processes of learning and teaching. The course is underpinned by a very strong emphasis on learning.

2. The course structure works extremely well in supporting trainees' progress. In the first term, trainees begin school placements early in the course through a well-planned sequence of weeks when time is spent in both the university and in schools. This secures very effectively the focus on learning and teaching, as well as coherence between university and school-based work and between curriculum and professional studies. This successful model has now been applied to the placement in a second school in the final term.

3. Evaluations by trainees and feedback from school-based mentors indicate that university-based curriculum studies and professional studies are of very high quality. The links between them are particularly impressive. For example, trainees' evaluations of professional studies sessions include the implications for curriculum studies and this is used by curriculum tutors to develop key themes within the subject context. The use of high quality school-based tasks ensures that this strong coherence carries through into schools. An example of the effectiveness of the approach is the highly impressive understanding that trainees have of the full implications of *Every Child Matters* for all aspects of their work.

4. An outstanding feature of the course is the quality, as well as the frequency, of curriculum tutor visits to schools and the impact of these in securing trainees' progress. The quality of school-based mentoring is high, and much is outstanding. Trainees' progress is monitored thoroughly and accurately, and interventions are swift, carefully considered and effective.

5. Trainees' ability to engage in high-level discussions about learning and teaching with curriculum tutors and mentors is a key feature that makes the provision outstanding. Trainees are expected to become at least competent teachers by the end of the school placement in the second term. In the final placement, they are expected to acquire greater breadth of experience and an even more secure achievement of the Standards through demonstrating higher-order teaching skills. They are encouraged and supported well to experiment and try out alternative approaches. They are prepared well to do this by the quality of training they receive in the first part of the course.

6. The care and support given to trainees and the excellent use made of individual learning profiles ensures that the individual needs of trainees are catered for exceptionally well. At each well-planned assessment review point, a set of indicators of progression are used very effectively for both formative and summative reviews of progress. However, at the higher level they do not accurately reflect what trainees are expected to achieve when they are working beyond the Standards in the final placement.

Management and quality assurance

7. The rigorous application of extremely thorough selection procedures ensures the recruitment of high quality trainees. The procedures are focused appropriately on the key factors for success on the course: intellectual capacity, analytical ability, the resilience to cope with the workload, and the potential to become good teachers. School-based mentors are fully involved in selection and their expertise is used well to complement that of the curriculum tutors. One particularly strong feature is the way the requirement for trainees to make a visit to a school prior to interview is used to test their ability to analyse rather than describe their observations and establish early the focus on learning. The procedures are continually reviewed to ensure they are fully effective. In the past, the recruitment of black and minority ethnic trainees was low. The university researched this in detail, established key actions, and recruitment is now well above both regional and national levels.

8. Leadership and management in the university and the quality of partnership are key strengths that underpin the outstanding quality of the provision. Curriculum areas have sufficient autonomy to ensure that provision best meets the needs of the subject. The significant strength is the quality of the collective decision making process that involves all curriculum tutors through frequent formal and informal discussion and argument. This process leads to a uniformly high quality and intellectually rigorous model of teacher education. Another especially strong feature is the research-based approach to continuous improvement, where course development is based on thorough and detailed evaluation, the use of focused research, and a collective review of the outcomes and decision making.

9. The partnership is exceptionally strong, based on the shared understanding of good teacher education, and of learning and teaching in the subjects. Schools fully recognise the benefits of their involvement in the partnership. This is being extended and further embedded through work with whole subject departments in schools, and through a continuum of teacher education. The university has very high expectations of schools in terms of the quality of the training and support they provide, the amount they are expected to do, and the number of trainees they take. These high expectations are appreciated by schools. They feel part of a partnership that respects and highly values what they bring to the provision. This is reflected in good attendance at subject mentor meetings, where discussions about learning and teaching and the implications for teacher education take place, and in the impressive commitment of professional tutors and mentors to the partnership. The particular

expertise that some of the partnership schools have is also used well to the benefit of all trainees in, for example, a particular subject cohort.

10. The very good quality of the relationship with schools is, in part, due to the quality and frequency of curriculum and general tutor visits, in addition to excellent communications. The highly effective combination of monitoring, modelling and moderation that takes place during tutor visits, as well as the quality and impact of the support provided and interventions taken, is key in ensuring the high quality of the provision.

11. The highly effective research-based approach to course development and very good quality improvement planning are fundamental to maintaining the excellent quality of the provision. Equally impressive is the way the university anticipates and responds to national and other initiatives and developments. For example, the response to the Gilbert Report on personalised learning, led to the improving individualised learning for trainees as well as ensuring that trainees understand fully the implications of personalised learning in the school context. The university is considering carefully the implications of changes in 14 to 19 education through discussions with further education colleges and other post-16 providers with a view to adopting an associate partners arrangement.