

Mid Essex SCITT Consortium

Shenfield High School
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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Mid Essex SCITT consortium works in partnership with 12 schools to provide initial teacher training (ITT). It offers a one-year post graduate course with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), for the 11-18 age range. The specialist subjects are English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography, art and information and communication technology (ICT). At the time of the inspection there were 18 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 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 good attention paid to meeting trainees' individual needs
- the sharp focus on subject auditing and developing knowledge for teaching
- the effective subject teamwork between the mentors
- the strong management of the partnership at all levels
- the excellent communication between the partners
- the induction procedures for new partnership schools.

Points for consideration

- improving the training on lesson outcomes and objectives so that trainees are better able to plan and evaluate lessons
- improving the consistency in the way that school-based staff, particularly professional mentors, evaluate the quality of training
- improving both the focus and the quality of tasks and assignments
- improving the quality of strategic planning.

The quality of training

1. The good quality of training has been maintained since the previous inspection. The course is structured well and there is good coherence between the elements. It meets the Requirements fully. The training takes place in an impressive, new, well-equipped training centre and in partnership schools that are good venues for training. The extensive nature of the first school placement helps build the trainees' skills as classroom practitioners and gives them the opportunity to establish strong relationships with pupils and staff.

2. The content of the centre-based training is good. It covers essentials such as the National Curriculum, 14-19 developments and general professional studies topics such as inclusion and behaviour management. These are mostly well received by trainees although sometimes they would welcome more opportunities for discussion. In addition, training on learning objectives and outcomes does not consistently develop trainees' skills so that they are able to thoroughly measure the effectiveness of their lessons. Experienced and well qualified teachers provide good subject training, ably supported by mentors and staff, including headteachers. Opportunities for trainees to share their expertise and lead parts of sessions are well exploited. There is some exciting and innovative course content. For example, in modern foreign languages, a day trip to Dunkirk gives trainees experience of risk assessment and of acquiring first hand resources which then form the basis of lesson planning. In mathematics, trainees systematically consider common misconceptions and how these can be overcome through their teaching.

3. Mentors receive clear guidance to help them link central and school-based training. Much training in schools is focused firmly on responding to trainees' needs. This is a distinctive strength. Subject mentors provide a great deal of support to trainees. Arrangements for auditing and developing trainees' subject knowledge are good and all mentors take this matter seriously. The process starts early in the training. Action plans are carefully followed up in schools and by the lead subject mentors. There is a good focus on subject knowledge for teaching. Where weaknesses are identified, trainees are supported well and are monitored carefully. In English and modern foreign languages, trainees make impressive progress in their understanding of how to assess pupils' learning.

4. The procedures for monitoring trainees' progress towards the Standards are thorough. The trainees' progress file is useful in bringing together in one place, targets and evaluations. Sections are referenced carefully to specific Standards and many identify targets which helpfully promote trainees' improvement. Tasks and assignments complement the training though some titles are too broad and submissions can be descriptive rather than analytical. Final judgements about the pass/fail borderline are secure.

Management and quality assurance

5. The Mid Essex SCITT has been established for many years and has a good reputation locally for the quality of the training it provides. Although the partnership is successful in enrolling more minority ethnic trainees than its target, it is not meeting its total target numbers of trainees in most subjects. Shortages are acute in modern foreign languages and ICT. This is not due to any weaknesses in marketing but to a difficulty in recruiting to the area. Rigorous interview procedures are applied to ensure places are only offered to those who are likely to succeed. Retention rates are good and, on completion, many trainees take up teaching posts in partnership or local schools.

6. Management is effective at all levels. Communication between the partners is excellent both on routine matters and on strategic issues, and through committees such as the headteacher steering group. Schools are fully committed to the partnership. Leadership is also good. The programme manager and course tutor continually seek ways to improve the provision and the subject leaders are effective at leading the teams of school-based mentors. Subject teamwork is impressive. The headteacher of the lead school and the administrator provide good support. The management of the partnership is underpinned by a clear partnership agreement that is valued by everyone. Selection and de-selection criteria are applied rigorously. An outstanding strength is the ways that schools new to the partnership are thoroughly inducted.

7. Assessment of trainees is regular, timely and accurate. There has been a shift of emphasis since the last inspection to place more responsibility for monitoring the trainees' progress with the lead subject mentors and professional mentors. This works well. The good arrangements for monitoring the quality of the training programme are extensive but are sometimes applied inconsistently, particularly by professional mentors. The role of lead subject mentor is not specified in the quality assurance policy and consequently different interpretations occur in practice.

8. Each element of the training is thoroughly reviewed by trainees. Their views, together with evaluations by school and centre-based staff, are used to improve practice. The different management groups monitor the impact of actions well. There is thorough development and action planning for the whole course and for individual subjects. The managers of the partnership articulate a clear vision for its long term development but have yet to commit this to a strategic plan that incorporates their own data obtained from benchmarking.