

Oxford Brookes University

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A secondary initial teacher training
inspection report

2007/08

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Introduction

Oxford Brookes University works in partnership with around 80 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers secondary postgraduate training in art, English, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, science and religious education. At the time of the inspection there were 129 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 revised report combines evidence 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 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 Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the effectiveness of the training in meeting trainees' individual needs
- the high level of coherence between the different elements of the training
- very proficient management at all levels, which supports high quality training and good outcomes
- thorough evaluation and rigorous quality assurance of provision which promotes high quality training
- the strong collaborative partnership with schools
- very effective monitoring and assessment of trainees' progress in meeting the Standards and the value added to trainees by the course.

Point for consideration

- developing a more rigorous culture of self-evaluation within partner schools to improve even further the quality of school-based training.

The quality of training

1. The quality of training is outstanding. The structure and content of the training are very well designed to ensure trainees meet the Standards. School placements are timely and carefully planned. The content of the course is skilfully organised into modules that ensure excellent progression in developing the trainees' knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching. The course also has a strong emphasis on developing trainees' pastoral skills so they can become effective form tutors. The content of professional studies includes very good coverage of key educational topics and subject training is similarly comprehensive. The course is regularly reviewed and revised to ensure that trainees are up to date with national initiatives. Training about the *Every Child Matters* agenda is prominent in professional studies and features in all modules which gives excellent coherence to the whole course; in art, geography and music its coverage is explicitly mapped for trainees throughout their subject training programmes.

2. Trainees understand clearly the links between all aspects of central and school-based training. Themes are introduced early and revisited as trainees' experience develops and they are able to apply knowledge from the professional studies and subject training to classroom practice. For example, in geography, lesson planning becomes progressively more demanding from the mechanics of using a lesson plan proforma to analysing the key components of a good lesson. Professional tutors and mentors play an important role in supporting university professional studies topics and providing comprehensive whole school induction before trainees move into subject departments. Subject content is related strongly to the Standards and subject leaders plan their programmes carefully to build on professional studies. The university provides exceptionally good guidance for subject mentors to ensure that their weekly contributions are closely linked to the requirements of the course. Assignments build on and support key subject and professional studies issues.

3. Central training sessions are planned and delivered very effectively. University tutors are well qualified and experienced, and good use is made of partnership school staff and other visiting lecturers. Trainees' evaluations rate the quality of all aspects of the training as at least good and to a large extent very good. They describe training sessions, particularly in subjects, as stimulating, practical and consistently modelling good practice. Trainees are often encouraged to evaluate critically the delivery of these sessions in order to increase their own understanding of the impact of different teaching methods on learners. Some schools provide training on whole school issues for all trainees where their provision is particularly innovative or effective. Information and communication technology is used very well to support the training and is a particular strength of the programme in English where the tutor has established an online subject resource.

4. High quality mentoring in schools supports trainees well in achieving the Standards. Mentors are enthusiastic, conscientious and sensitive in the guidance they give trainees, providing constructive and practical suggestions for improvement.

Lesson observation feedback is detailed and increasingly subject focused as the course progresses. However, the quality of a minority of mentors' work is less strong; for example, target setting is occasionally insufficiently linked to the Standards or to learning objectives for trainees.

5. Support for trainees' individual needs is excellent. Identification and enhancement of trainees' subject knowledge begins at interview and is constantly revisited both at the university and in schools. A very good trainee profile and individual training plan is used highly effectively by trainees and trainers to personalise the training. Trainees are matched to schools to provide suitably contrasting experiences. In maths, paired placements have been carefully chosen in order to maximise the mutual support and experiences of trainees. Professional tutors develop their training programmes directly in response to trainees' needs, particularly in the second placement. Central training, particularly in art and music, celebrate and capitalise on the different backgrounds of trainees in order to extend their expertise.

6. Monitoring and assessment of trainees' progress in meeting the Standards are rigorous. Judgements are made regularly and systematically by university and school trainers who are directed by clear and well considered guidance and grade descriptors. These judgements are monitored and moderated very effectively, both internally and externally, to ensure that the assessment of trainees is rigorous, consistent and accurate.

Management and quality assurance

7. The strengthening of management and quality assurance procedures and the implementation of a range of initiatives since the previous inspection has contributed to the improved and high quality training and standards. The professional studies programme is better and its coherence with subject training is stronger. Training and guidance for mentors is more effective, ensuring that central and school-based training are more complimentary. The course has been updated well to reflect contemporary developments in education. An excellent cycle of quality assurance activities, including whole programme and subject self-evaluation reports and action plans, has been established. As a result, good practice has been developed and disseminated effectively across subjects ensuring that the majority of training is of a very high quality.

8. Selection procedures are thorough and implemented consistently across all subjects. Retention rates are high and most trainees gain employment, many in local partner schools. Applications are scrutinised carefully; interview tasks are well designed to assess trainees' suitability for teaching and have a very strong focus on evaluating trainees' subject knowledge. In art, mathematics and religious education some trainees are recruited with degrees that only partly match these subjects. However, these trainees are given high quality support that ensures they succeed.

Efforts to recruit trainees from a range of backgrounds particularly minority ethnic groups is successful and well considered strategies are used to do this.

9. The training is managed very effectively by the course leader in conjunction with the school liaison tutor, the quality assurance tutor and the subject tutors. A strong training partnership has been created, founded on close collaboration and highly effective communication with school partners. School-based trainers are given very good opportunities to make a contribution to the planning, development and review of provision through membership of the course and steering committees, through regular meetings and formal evaluations.

10. Comprehensive and well presented course documentation and high quality differentiated training ensures school-based trainers have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are well equipped to meet the specific requirements of each school experience. University tutors benefit from a range of continuing professional development opportunities linked to course development. As a result, central and school-based trainers work together very effectively to meet trainees' needs. However, for a few mentors', limited attendance at meetings restricts the sharing of good practice. The effective deployment of resources supports training very well and provides trainees with high quality teaching and learning facilities. Trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with specific disabilities are given considerable support to assist their successful completion of the course and the effectiveness of this support is monitored closely.

11. A wide range of strategies are used to evaluate the quality of training and inform its improvement. Detailed evaluations by all trainees and trainers on each of the phases of the programme are benchmarked regionally and against national data. Subject tutors undertake effective monitoring and reporting on the quality of school-based training. This provides valuable information that supports the management of high quality training and good outcomes. A key strength of the evaluation process is the way the university takes account of the outcomes of the training in respect to trainees' attainment of the Standards by carefully tracking the value added to each trainee by the course.

12. The wealth of evaluative data gathered ensures that the course leader and subject tutors have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the course and the partnership. These are thoroughly analysed and presented in annual subject and whole programme evaluation reports which reflect a shared commitment to continuous improvement. Areas for development are tackled systematically and collaboratively with school trainers. However, the evaluations made on individual schools are not shared with them and there is variable and often limited self-evaluation by individual schools. Well devised programme and subject action plans take very good account of evaluation data, external examiners' reports and previous inspection findings. The management and quality assurance of the course are highly effective and the improvements they have made to the quality of provision since the last inspection is clearly evident.