

University of Bristol

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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Bristol works in partnership with 70 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) training in citizenship, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and science. There were 230 trainees on the PGCE course at the time of the inspection.

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 Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the consistently well-qualified and committed trainees recruited to the course in all subjects
- the high quality training across the partnership
- the effective personalisation of training for individuals, combined with strong individual support
- the strong ethos of collaboration and collegiality in partnership working
- the consistently effective training and support for trainers to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities
- the rigorous and effective procedures for evaluating course provision, including the arrangements for feedback to trainers
- the open and comprehensive arrangements for external moderation leading to sharp judgements and rigorous feedback.

Points for consideration

- considering how to improve the arrangements for the university educational professional studies training so that trainees have the opportunity to contribute to the sessions and discuss issues arising
- making greater use of data on trainees' achievements against the Standards to explain differences between subjects and to direct improvement planning.

The quality of training

1. Courses have been fully updated to reflect recent national developments, such as the new Standards, changes to the National Curriculum, *Every Child Matters* and the new 14-19 diplomas. In addition, individual subject programmes are constantly under review to ensure that they are up to date; for example, the modern foreign languages programme includes work on the emerging trends in primary school language teaching.

2. Recent course developments have resulted in more emphasis being placed on the importance of reflective work and this is proving to be very successful. Trainees are able to articulate clearly the ways in which evaluative work supports their progress. Tutors give high quality advice and support to trainees on how to carry out reflective work. Tasks and assignments support the training programme effectively.

3. The educational professional studies programme covers a wide range of relevant topics, delivered mainly through a series of whole-cohort lectures. Trainees feel that this is not an effective model, particularly where there are several lectures in one day. While opportunities for follow up work in educational professional studies exist in school-based sessions and in assessed assignments, opportunities for trainees to contribute to and discuss issues arising in the university educational professional studies training sessions are limited. The university and schools have worked successfully to ensure coherence across the programme. Professional mentors, well supported by good quality guidance from the university, give much thought to the way in which the content of the school-based educational professional studies programme is planned and delivered.

4. There have been few changes to course structure over recent years; the current pattern of school placements and university-based study provides an effective framework that supports trainees' progress. A certain amount of flexibility, particularly during the summer term, ensures that the course can be adapted in response to requests from tutors and trainees to meet the needs of individuals and subject groups. Many trainees choose that time to gain experience of teaching a second subject.

5. University-based subject training is very highly rated by trainees; the team of committed and highly competent tutors models good practice effectively. Trainees unanimously comment on exceptionally high levels of support and feel that, whilst they are being continuously pushed in order to reach their full potential, they are very well supported throughout the course in order to achieve this.

6. School-based training is rated highly by trainees. Weekly meetings between mentors and trainees include thorough reviews of progress, target setting and planning of future activities and coverage of subject-specific issues. This training ties in well with aspects of the university-based programme. A strength of the school-based training is the involvement of departmental staff, in addition to the subject

mentor, in carrying out observations of trainees. This means that trainees benefit from a variety of perspectives on their classroom work. The quality of school-based educational professional studies is also strong with programmes typically involving contributions from a wide range of school staff. Trainees appreciate, and benefit from, being able to relate topics to the school setting.

7. University staff have successfully developed the virtual learning environment, which now features a wealth of resources, including some of excellent quality. Trainees benefit greatly from easy access to such resources. The virtual learning environment is particularly useful for trainees placed at some distance from the university, ensuring that they are kept fully up to date with course developments.

8. A strong emphasis on personalisation of the training programme starts at the selection stage. The thorough needs analysis, planning of training activities and constant review of agreed targets, combined with strong support from tutors, ensure that trainees' needs are fully met. The quality of feedback from lesson observations is consistently high. Through tutorial meetings, trainees' progress is closely monitored; all strengths and areas for development are discussed in detail. Tutors provide very high quality feedback from assignments, ensuring that trainees have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their work.

9. Trainees are regularly and systematically assessed against the Standards. They are involved in all stages of the assessment process, contribute to the evaluation of their progress, and are fully aware of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Procedures for assessing trainees at set points during the course are firmly established. All of those involved in assessment have a clear understanding of their role in forming a shared judgement. Mentors find the 'pen portraits' particularly useful when assessing trainees and as a result there is good level of accuracy and consistency across the partnership. The progress committee, which meets just before Easter each year, gives individual consideration to those trainees deemed to be making less than the expected progress. This enables high quality, targeted support to be provided for those trainees. Rigorous procedures ensure security of judgements at the pass/fail borderline.

Management and quality assurance

10. Selection procedures are thorough in identifying suitable trainees, the majority of whom are well-qualified and highly committed to the course. All Requirements are met and all relevant checks carried out to a high standard. The PGCE administration office provides efficient, high level support for the selection process, working closely with the PGCE team of tutors and course managers. School-based tutors contribute to recruitment and selection in a range of ways, for example, through reading and commenting on applications, or hosting prospective trainees in the schools.

11. University-wide equal opportunities and race relations policies are applied carefully to the selection process: the significant number of disabled trainees on the course speaks for the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy. Trainees, including those with disabilities, are given extensive support if they require it and this contributes to the generally high level of course completion. The provider consistently meets the targets agreed with the Training and Development Agency for Schools for the recruitment of minority ethnic trainees. Several trainees recruited to the modern foreign languages course are foreign nationals. Trainees are very well supported both at the university and in schools; as a result they make excellent progress. The occasional incident that does arise is carefully logged and quickly dealt with.

12. The partnership is effectively managed and works well in planning and delivering the subject programmes. A particular strength lies in the strong sense of collaboration and collegiality fostered by course managers and tutors. The partnership agreement is a detailed, helpful document. Roles and responsibilities are very clearly articulated and such clarity helps procedures to be implemented consistently.

13. New mentors are thoroughly prepared for their roles. While attendance at mentor meetings is not always good, tutors find alternative ways of briefing and informing mentors who cannot attend. New university tutors are carefully inducted. All tutors meet regularly and they share features of good practice. Procedures to ensure trainers have the skills, knowledge and understanding to undertake the training are excellent and contribute to the consistently high quality of engagement of trainers across the partnership schools.

14. Training programmes are rigorously monitored through trainee evaluations and by course managers. With the exception of aspects of the university educational professional studies programme, trainees in all subjects consistently rate their training highly. Where issues arise, training programmes are adjusted and refined. A particular strength of course monitoring and evaluation is that mentors are given copies of trainees' evaluations following blocks of school experience. General issues arising from evaluations are discussed in the regular mentor and professional mentor meetings at the university. This leads to an openness and willingness to accept constructive criticism and helps to maintain the consistently high quality of school-based training. University tutors also receive feedback from trainee evaluations and act upon them. Once again, the process is open and constructive and leads to continuous improvement and enhancement of courses.

15. All assessments are sent to the assessment tutor who monitors the process and picks up quickly on issues that arise. The cause for concern procedure operates effectively. The procedures for external moderation are very strong. Reports from external examiners are sharp and rigorous. Action points and recommendations are fully acted upon.

16. The provider's self-evaluation is honest in reflecting areas of strength and areas for improvement. The improvement planning process is comprehensive,

although on occasion there is limited use of data on trainees' outcomes to explain or direct improvement, particularly in relation to differences in trainees' achievements between subjects. Subject tutors produce relevant annual subject reports with action points for improvement. Course managers, with the steering committee, produce an annual improvement plan. The provider works assiduously on bringing about improvements. For example, developmental work this year with professional mentors relates to a recommendation made by the external examiner that the provider improves the role of the professional mentor in monitoring and quality assuring the role of mentors. Excellent progress has been made in drawing up a revised set of parameters for what can be expected of mentors, professional mentors and the school more widely. The provider works collaboratively with its partnership and does not attempt to impose change. School partners have a strong stake in the partnership and are prepared to implement improvements because they have contributed to them. This is a strong feature of provision.