

Buckinghamshire New University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Inspection dates
Lead inspector

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by specialist inspectors in accordance with the *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11)*.
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

The provider

3. Buckinghamshire New University offers training leading to the status of Qualified Teacher, Learning and Skills. Delivered at its partner colleges, the university offers a two-year part-time diploma to teach in the lifelong learning sector (DTLLS). The qualification meets statutory requirements and is endorsed by Standards Verification UK. The diploma programme incorporates both 'preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector' (PTLLS) and a one-year 'certificate' (CTLLS).
4. The partnership includes three colleges of further education. One of the colleges, though, has no trainees enrolled in either the first or second year of the course. In total, there are 68 in-service trainees on the diploma programme. This figure incorporates two second-year groups at each of the two colleges and one first-year group in one of the colleges. Most trainees teach on vocational programmes and are employed as teachers at the colleges where they undertake their training. The 13 trainees who work elsewhere teach in settings such as defence, work-based learning or the prison service.
5. The partnership's initial teacher training provision for further education teachers was inspected in 2006 and judged to be adequate.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Key strengths

6. The key strengths are:
- the good development of trainees' practical teaching skills
 - the good progress made by trainees
 - trainees' careful lesson planning, which routinely takes into account the attainment of individual students
 - the very effective development of trainees' reflective skills
 - trainees' highly professional approach to their teaching role
 - the constructively critical feedback on lesson observations that helps trainees to improve.

Required actions

7. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership must:
- improve the rigour of self-assessment at the partnership level
 - ensure that self-evaluation and action planning takes full account of up-to-date legislation relating to equality and diversity.

Recommendation

8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- ensure that all trainees are knowledgeable about new developments in the teaching of their subject
 - improve trainees' understanding of social and cultural diversity, so that they can integrate these more explicitly in their teaching.
9. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership should:
- develop a more formal, quantifiable approach to judge trainees' attainment and progress across the partnership.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

10. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Trainees benefit from informative and supportive recruitment and induction arrangements. All are following an appropriate programme, as indicated by the high success rates. The advice they are given is appropriate but the choice of courses on offer depends on the college. With varying start dates and different modes of delivery, the colleges' own PTLLS and CTLLS programmes provide a degree of flexibility that cannot be accommodated by the first year of the partnership's diploma. In effect, two of the colleges use the partnership's programme as a second-year 'top up'. The colleges are responsive to demand and have some success when marketing their courses to attract external trainees who might not otherwise consider teaching but there are no partnership-wide initiatives to recruit from under-represented groups.

11. A high proportion of trainees successfully complete the programme, with no significant variations between different groups of trainees over the last few years. As the trainees are already employed as teachers, very few withdraw or fail to complete the diploma. Where this happens, it is almost always due to changing job roles or, on occasion, personal issues; college tutors make every effort to ensure that these trainees are able to successfully complete the programme at a later stage. Inspectors agree with the partnership's judgement that, overall, attainment is good. The development of a more formal, quantifiable approach to judge trainees' attainment is under consideration by the partnership.

12. Trainees make good progress, regardless of their prior experience or qualifications. They quickly become adept at lesson planning and then go on to refine the quality of their preparation, taking care to select the most appropriate teaching methods and resources and to match these to the needs of the students, as well as to syllabus requirements. Where initial assessment on the programme has identified the need for trainees to develop their own academic writing, literacy or numeracy skills, they benefit from good support and, in the main, reach good standards. As a consequence of this, trainees are quick to identify and address similar issues with their own students.

13. Trainees develop good practical teaching skills. They explain complex concepts well, use question and answer techniques effectively to check students' understanding, manage discussions with ease and use appropriate technology confidently. Trainees' competence in the classroom or workshop reflects the strong emphasis on the diploma programme on generic teaching skills. Trainees are well qualified in their subject area and most of those who teach on vocational programmes have relevant commercial or industrial experience. Almost all trainees have strong support from colleagues they work closely with. Some take the opportunity of the action research project to explore aspects of their subject pedagogy. However, not all trainees systematically develop their subject or vocational expertise, through support from their mentors. Although most trainees

benefit from good, subject-specific guidance, a few do not. Trainees do not draw on expertise at partnership colleges beyond their own place of employment.

14. The detailed and constructively critical feedback diploma trainees receive on their lesson observations plays an important part in developing trainees' knowledge and skills. This feedback, along with the formative assessment of written assignments, is used well by trainees to inform their progress. In evaluating their practice, trainees also draw on the training sessions and, to a lesser degree, on their reading. Although their professional development journals are not all of a consistently high quality, trainees develop well the ability to reflect on their practice. They speak with confidence about their strengths and are very clear about what they need to do to improve still further.

15. Trainees demonstrate a high degree of professionalism. They are keen to improve and aware of how the quality of their teaching reflects on their employer and on the performance of their students. The practice of those employed by the colleges is strongly influenced not just by the diploma programme but also by the wide range of staff development activities and feedback on their teaching, as part of the internal quality assurance observation systems where they work. Trainees' success on the diploma is due, in no small part, to the high level of individual support they receive from college tutors. Although external trainees do not benefit from the colleges' in-house staff development activities, they too are well supported.

16. Resources are used satisfactorily. Teacher trainers are appropriately qualified and mentors are, on the whole, suitably trained and experienced. Trainees have access to sufficient resources, but rarely take advantage of the university's facilities. A partnership virtual learning environment (VLE) is available but trainees prefer to use the VLE in the colleges where they are based. Trainees use this resource primarily to access course-related documentation.

17. Provision is good in both of the colleges that have partnership trainees. The quality of training is of a high standard and systems and procedures, including assessment arrangements, are applied with reasonable consistency across the partnership.

18. Trainees' promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, although the partnership judged this aspect of its work to be good. Trainees create an inclusive environment in their classrooms and workshops and they treat their students and colleagues with respect. They plan their lessons carefully to take into account the differing backgrounds and abilities of their students and adapt materials and tasks accordingly. Where appropriate, trainees refer their students to specialist support services within the colleges and they have a good understanding of issues relating to disability. Most trainees, though, do not have the knowledge or confidence to exploit opportunities in their teaching to promote positive images of social and cultural diversity.

Capacity to improve further and/or to sustain high quality outcomes

Grade: 3

19. The partnership has satisfactory capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and to take the actions required to secure improvements. The two colleges with partnership trainees have well-established and rigorous self-assessment processes, which lead to the annual production of comprehensive self-assessment reports. These thorough evaluations of performance include a detailed analysis of data and the results of feedback from trainees. The college self-evaluations and associated action plans are generally very effective in identifying actions to secure improvements in the programme. As a consequence, strengths around trainees' progress, practical teaching skills and professionalism identified in the last inspection have been maintained and, to some extent, enhanced.

20. This level of rigour is not applied to the annual course review reports that feed into the university's annual review and evaluation process. These course review reports are very short and insufficiently evaluative, and, consequently, they do not make a sufficient contribution to quality improvement at the partnership level.

21. The partnership's self-evaluation document is insufficiently analytical to provide a secure basis for improvement planning. This is due, in part, to the fact that the colleges do not have sufficient involvement in the self-assessment process and in the grading. The university does not systematically evaluate the quality of the provision, to ensure consistency and equity across the partnership and to underpin quality improvement. Not all areas for development associated with quality assurance that were identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed.

22. Across the partnership, trainees have good opportunities for their views to be heard, particularly through the work of the trainee course representatives. Changes to the programme have been initiated by trainees' views. The extent to which the partnership analyses trainees' feedback on completed modules has improved in the current academic year.

23. Moderation meetings to review the standards of written assessed work are effective and the partnership is working to strengthen these arrangements, to ensure greater consistency of standards across the partner colleges. Partnership-wide moderation of lesson observations is not as systematic.

24. Across the partnership, clear strategic planning and well-developed arrangements to support and further improve collaborative arrangements between the university and its partner colleges are in place. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, with good links between the university and college managers. At course level, though, the university's approach is primarily reactive rather than proactive. University and college staff effectively collaborated in the development of the new diploma programme for 2007/2008 and university tutors make a helpful contribution to the programme by teaching on the action research module.

25. Action planning in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity across the partnership is weak, particularly with regard to the promotion of race equality. At college level, appropriate schemes and action plans are in place. At the university, disability and gender equality schemes are supported by clear action plans to secure improvements for students, including university students based at the colleges. However, the university recognises that implementation of action planning to promote race equality has been very slow and is not yet sufficiently developed.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

Amersham and Wycombe College
Aylesbury College
East Berkshire College

Inspection judgements¹

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; Grade 2 is good; Grade 3 is satisfactory; Grade 4 is inadequate

Overall Effectiveness

		ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		2
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	3
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	3
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	3

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality outcomes

To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?	3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?	3
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?	3
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?	3

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11; Ofsted July 2008; Reference no: 080128

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