

The Learning Institute

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 a team of 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.

Key to inspection grades

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

The provider

3. The Learning Institute was established in 2004 as a school-centred provider of initial teacher education leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and the award of the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education validated by the University of Exeter. The provider offers training in the following secondary subjects and age ranges: information and communications technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education and science (all shortage subjects) for the 11-16 age range; and applied business, health and social care, and media studies for the 14-19 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 17 trainees on the secondary programmes.
4. The partnership currently comprises a lead school and ten other secondary schools. This is a significant change from the initial model based on three core schools and has required careful management. Although there are many other providers of initial teacher education (ITE) in the South West, both higher education institution-based and school-centred, The Learning Institute offers a distinctive provision including the only vocational teacher training in the region. The provision is matched very carefully to clearly identified local and regional needs and the provider is working hard to establish itself as a specialist provider of teacher training in vocational subjects and the 14-19 diplomas.
5. The Learning Institute offers a foundation degree in teaching and learning for suitably experienced, unqualified teachers and postgraduate professional development for qualified teachers. The provider also manages a project funded by the Department for International Development (DfID); this focuses on the development of teacher and pupil advocates for reducing poverty in the South West.

Provision in the secondary phase

Key strengths:

6. The key strengths are:
 - the capacity of leadership to anticipate and respond to change and to secure and sustain improvement
 - the attention given to the personal well-being of all trainees
 - the quality of the training and the achievements of trainees on the 14-19 courses
 - the coherence between subject and professional studies and the effectiveness of the subject and generic tutor roles in securing progress for trainees in schools
 - trainees' understanding of current educational developments
 - retention and employment rates for all courses.

Recommendations

7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider should:
 - secure stronger links between accurate monitoring of trainees' progress, the setting of clear and precise targets, and matching training to individual needs
 - improve the support for those trainees who find the transition between the two school placements difficult
 - build upon outstanding practice in 11-16 subject courses to ensure all trainers have a clear and shared understanding of such practice.
8. In order to improve the capacity to secure further improvement the provider should:
 - ensure that there is accurate and incisive self-evaluation of all aspects of the provision leading to improvement plans that ensure that all involved in training are clear about the priorities for improvement and their role in securing these.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

9. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good, with outstanding features.

10. Trainees' achievements are good overall and outstanding for those training to teach in the 14-19 age range. All trainees have the subject knowledge required to teach in the relevant age range. Many, and particularly the 14-19 trainees, use their previous experience and expertise significantly to enhance their teaching. The trainees on the media studies course describe an impressive array of examples of how they bring their prior experiences to bear on their teaching. Most trainees, at this mid-point in the course, are consistently teaching lessons that are at least good and many lessons have outstanding characteristics. At this stage in their training, some trainees' explanations of the approaches they use to differentiate their lessons, monitor students' learning and adjust their teaching accordingly are exemplary. For example, one trainee made outstanding use of very carefully planned and managed questions to determine how the students would be grouped for a particular topic, and the strategies then to be used to support each of the different groups and to monitor their progress against clear, expected learning outcomes.

11. All trainees have a good understanding of developments in the secondary curriculum and specific changes in their subject. The 11-16 trainees have excellent understanding of 14-19 developments and the implications for their own teaching. The 14-19 trainees have direct experience of teaching the new diplomas as well as other relevant 14-19 qualifications. A particular strength is trainees' understanding of how low levels of literacy and numeracy may be barriers to students' learning in the subject. They carefully plan activities and support to enable these students to develop their understanding. Mathematics trainees, for example, can explain how to help students to read vocabulary in mathematics by teaching them to apply their knowledge of the sounds in words. All have a detailed understanding of Every Child Matters and how this relates to their subject teaching and to the other roles of teachers.

12. The rigorous and consistent application of clearly defined selection criteria ensures that the trainees recruited are suitable for the course. Whilst recruitment is below target in the shortage subjects, the provider does everything it can to increase applications, without relaxing the selection criteria. Retention and employment rates are outstanding. The high retention is due to the outstanding levels of support for the personal well-being of all trainees. The appointment of a pastoral support tutor is an example of the highly effective use of resources. The high employment rates are directly related to the precise identification of local and regional needs for teachers of 14-19 vocational and diploma courses and shortage subjects. During the selection process and in the early stages of the course, detailed information is gathered about each trainee's strengths and areas for development. However, this is not always used well to enable trainees to make rapid progress. In a small number of cases, weaknesses in subject knowledge are not dealt with until later in the course when the trainee has to teach these topics.

13. The large majority of trainees make good progress; many of those on the 14-19 courses make outstanding progress. The best training is characterised by the clarity of targets for trainees based on accurate and comprehensive monitoring of their progress. The personalised training then uses a range of strategies to ensure the progress of the trainee. In these cases, the trainee is supported extremely well in combining the different elements of the training to improve their teaching. The best quality training uses a carefully managed combination of the following elements: explanations of theoretical underpinnings to establish a framework for the trainee; working alongside an experienced teacher who models best practice and then supports the trainee in applying this; accurate feedback to the trainee on their teaching; and focused observations of other teachers, often in other subjects. Where trainees make less progress, this is often due to lack of precision in the target setting and when the training is not matched so closely to the particular needs of the trainee. The trainees making most progress make excellent formative use of a set of trainee characteristics, where necessary supported well by tutors, to evaluate their own performance and to set themselves targets. Others are not supported by their mentors in the use of the characteristics in this formative way, and this inhibits their progress. The transition from the first to second school placement is managed well for most trainees, particularly those on 14-19 courses, resulting in steady progress. Some trainees find the transition more difficult, and in a small number of cases, the subsequent dip in their progress is not detected quickly enough and takes some weeks to remedy.

14. There is a strong sense of a shared understanding of good teaching and good training amongst trainers across the partnership on the 14-19 courses. This is one key factor in the outstanding progress made by trainees on these courses. Whilst there are examples of outstanding practice amongst the 11-16 subject courses, there is not the same sense of a clear and shared understanding, and hence there is more variation in the quality of provision across the partnership. This is particularly evident in the quality of feedback to trainees and target setting, and in how these are used to provide bespoke individual training in the 11-16 subjects.

15. A strong characteristic of all training is the complementary roles of the subject and generic tutors in schools. This is an excellent example of consistency with flexibility and excellent targeting of resources. All trainees have an individual subject and generic mentor and, in all cases, this supports the trainee's progress. The generic tutor matches their contribution to the particular needs of the trainee. Sometimes this involves focused observations and feedback to the trainee on their teaching. In others, the generic tutor directs the trainee to observe another teacher in a different subject. The generic tutor also has responsibility for the assessment of the trainee at the review points. This involves close working with the subject tutor and reinforces the coherence of the training.

16. The provider has moved to a more holistic approach for monitoring trainees' progress against the QTS Standards. This provides trainees with a much clearer indication of their overall progress, although this is not yet fully embedded across the partnership. This approach, together with the use of the trainee characteristics, supports the provider's aim of developing greater independence for trainees. The stronger trainees thrive on this, as demonstrated in the very high quality of their

reflective statements and the quality of their individual projects. Others require more support and, at this stage in the course, their personal evaluations lack sharpness.

17. Trainees' evaluations show clearly that the subject and professional studies sessions, which run for one day each week throughout the course, are highly effective in developing their understanding of subject pedagogy and of a wide range of other aspects of teaching. Excellent use is made of expertise in the schools and elsewhere to ensure that training is up-to-date and draws upon best practice. The coherence between these sessions is strong. A particularly highly regarded session involved showing trainees how to work with students for whom English is an additional language. Trainees are especially well informed about teaching in a diverse society, particularly given the local and regional context. They can explain well how they would plan and teach lessons differently if their classes contained a wider ethnic or cultural diversity or included students with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 2

18. The provider has good capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees, where these already exist, and to take the actions required to secure improvements where necessary. Some aspects are outstanding. There has been a trend of improvement over three years with a higher proportion of trainees being judged as outstanding year on year. This improvement is most marked in the 14-19 provision, and in particular for media studies, and has been sustained this year.

19. Self-evaluation at the partnership level is accurate and perceptive. The provider is clear about what is working well, those aspects that require further development and those that require improvement. The strategic plan is clearly focused on securing better outcomes for trainees. Extensive use is made of evaluations by trainees and tutors, as well as an analysis of trainees' final attainment, to inform this self-evaluation. An analysis is also undertaken of trainees' progress at a series of staged review points. This is used well to monitor individual trainees' progress, but is not analysed to provide an evaluation of the provision that could be used to make adjustments to benefit all trainees. The provider is scrupulous in its investigations into why trainees leave the course, on the rare occasions this happens, and of those who are at risk. This includes careful checking of selection, personal support, training, and the accuracy of on-going assessment and feedback. There is extensive informal evaluation by former trainees, and by senior staff in partnership schools to support information provided by the Training and Development Agency's survey of newly qualified teachers and induction tutors. However, this is not explicit and is not always clearly focused on the key issues identified through other evaluation and review.

20. There is variation in the quality of the self-evaluation undertaken by subject teams and by each of the schools in the partnership. This is stronger for the 14-19 courses. All subject lead practitioners have an accurate understanding of the

strengths and areas for development in their subject, which is based on their knowledge of each trainee and their progress, although in some cases, this lacks focus on a rigorous analysis of trainees' outcomes. A small number of schools undertake rigorous and thorough self-evaluation of their role in ITE and the contributions of all involved. This is not embedded across the partnership. Senior leaders are fully aware of this and have introduced an annual partnership conference to improve self-evaluation and to ensure greater clarity across the partnership about the priorities for improvement and all trainers' understanding of their role in securing these.

21. Internal and external moderation leads to accurate judgements about trainees' final attainments and the pass/fail boundary for the award of QTS is secure. Assessment procedures ensure that trainees' achievement of the QTS Standards is robustly assessed and moderated. Each assessment review point leads to moderation of judgements about trainees' progress. The amalgamation of the external moderator and examiner roles into one has led to sharper feedback to the provider and a better focus on the outcomes for trainees.

22. The leadership of the partnership at all levels has outstanding capacity to anticipate and respond to change. This is evidenced well by the trainees' understanding of a wide range of developments, most notably in 14-19 education. There is also strong evidence of the way in which the provider has managed changes within the partnership. The quality of succession planning for changes in subject leaders, for example, is outstanding. The provider has established a number of very strong links with other partners in the region to position itself for changes to ITE and other developments; for example, the introduction of 14-19 diplomas, establishing the Foundation degree and work with the DfID. Trainees receive a good range of inputs from professionals across the children's workforce, but the partnership has yet to provide all trainees with first-hand experience of working with other professionals.

23. The involvement of some partnership schools in the introduction of 14-19 diplomas, and the quality of the trainers on these courses, means that the provider is in a very strong position to continue the development of its 14-19 ITE courses. The provider is absolutely clear and accurate in its assessment of its strengths in this area and about what needs to be done to sustain the high quality training and outcomes for trainees. The improvements in the proportion of trainees on the 14-19 courses judged to be outstanding provides clear evidence of the provider's capacity to secure and sustain improvements.

24. There are many examples of the impact of the actions taken by the provider to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees; for example, the increase in the proportion of trainees being judged to be outstanding, improved retention rates, and ensuring that all trainees who accept a place turn up at the start of the course. There is some early evidence, from analysis of trainees' development plans and reflective statements and through careful monitoring of progress against specific QTS Standards, of the impact on trainees' outcomes of the improvements in training and assessment. Improvements plans for individual subjects, with a clear focus on securing improvements in the outcomes for trainees, are at an early stage of

development. These plans have not yet led to actions to deal fully with the variation in the quality of the training across subjects and schools.

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

		Secondary
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?	2
	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?	1
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?	1

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
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?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

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

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