

# Sheffield Hallam University

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Faculty of Development and Society  
Owen Building, Floor 11  
City Campus  
Sheffield  
S1 1WB

A primary initial teacher training  
Short inspection report  
2008/09

Managing inspector  
James Kilner HMI

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## Introduction

Sheffield Hallam University works in partnership with over 700 schools and early years settings to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers three-year Bachelor of Arts with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) courses for students wishing to work with three to seven year olds and five to eleven year olds. Post graduate courses are offered in the same age ranges. At the time of the inspection there were 671 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 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 next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework 2008 -11.

## Key strengths

- The partnership's management and quality assurance procedures which result in the provider having a thorough knowledge of its schools.
- The commitment to the partnership from schools, local authority and the university.
- The attention paid to ensuring that trainees develop high level teaching skills and a good understanding of current national initiatives.
- The high quality of mentor training.

## Points for consideration

- Developing the use of cluster schools, including utilising the identified individual strengths of partnership teachers to enhance school-based training.
- Ensuring that all trainees are set more focused targets and receive subject specific feedback following lesson observations.
- Finely tuning the timing of communication about placements in order to ensure schools have more preparation time.

## The quality of training

1. The quality of the training has improved and is at least good.
2. The structure and content is well planned to ensure that trainees have at least a good subject and pedagogical knowledge and understanding of the full range of the National Curriculum, the National Strategies and the Standards for qualified teacher status. Both the postgraduate and undergraduate training programmes are well-timed and balanced to ensure that trainees are suitably prepared for their school placements. A good feature is the links between professional studies and the subject courses. Practical directed tasks on serial days support the training well and provide good opportunities for trainees to apply what they have learnt at university to practical teaching in their placement schools. Assignments effectively link centre-based and school-based training. Training in inclusion has improved significantly. The *Every Child Matters* agenda permeates all aspects of the training, both in subject training sessions and in professional studies.
3. All elements of the training combine well to secure trainees' progress towards the Standards, and cohesion between subject training and professional studies is a particular strength. Links across the curriculum are being well-developed. There are strong links, too, between school- and centre-based training. Schools are given good guidance on the training programmes and link tutors provide good support so that they are fully aware of what is expected of school-based training. Trainees' response to centre-based and school-based training is positive; they feel well supported by staff and are provided with good models of teaching and learning.
4. The quality of centre-based training is good and succeeds in training well motivated knowledgeable and confident teachers. Tutors are enthusiastic, have high expectations and model good primary and early years practice. Partnership staff lead some sessions, such as behaviour management and Enterprise Education with cluster schools hosting sessions. Those interviewed during the inspection said that they would value even more involvement in contributing to training. There is a developing emphasis on personal research and reflection and trainees can elect to take part in specific projects, individually or in groups. A theme running through the training is the need for it to be practical, 'hands-on' and rooted in classroom practice.
5. Training is well-resourced and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT). For example, the university's virtual learning environment provides good support to trainees as well as effective communication between trainees and staff. Teaching resources and classroom bases in the Arundel centre provide a backdrop for displays of trainees' work as well as modelling high quality settings for trainees.
6. School-based training is good. Trainees feel well supported by link tutors and school-based mentors, who are made aware of their trainees' targets from previous placements and audits. This enables them to provide training which meets trainees' individual needs. The quality of lesson observation feedback, however, varies. It is

consistently evaluative with clear and achievable targets, but in some instances targets are too generic and comments describe trainees' teaching. Although subject specific feedback has improved since the last inspection, this remains an area for further development for school mentors.

7. Within the university, there is a developing culture of target setting and evidence based profiling. Trainees talk confidently about their targets and the action they need to take and the evidence they will provide for having met their targets. Rigorous systems are well established to audit trainees' needs. Weaknesses are identified early and resolved through a wide range of support, including organised peer support, additional workshops and individual tutorials.

8. Trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards is well monitored both in schools and by academic and link tutors. Regular meetings between academic tutors and their tutees provide close monitoring of progress, identification of training needs and additional support for learning. Trainees are confident in assembling evidence because they are guided well.

## Management and quality assurance

9. Management and quality assurance are good.

10. Following the previous inspection, the university undertook a rigorous internal academic audit. Changes to the senior management structure, together with new personnel, were instrumental in effecting rapid improvements to identified weaknesses and non-compliance. The immediate priority was to gain a clear picture of the quality of partnership schools as being appropriate venues for trainees. Together with the university link tutors, a team of external consultants undertook a thorough overhaul of every school in the partnership, categorising the suitability of all. Schools deemed unsatisfactory have been de-selected but are still offered support from the university. Schools are aware of their category and the reasons why. They are given guidance as to how to proceed to become a partnership leader school should they wish to proceed.

11. The role of academic tutors has been developed further; academic tutors now also take on the role of university link tutor. They provide a single point of contact with the school ensuring much clearer lines of communication. Each university link tutor has a brief to maintain and develop the quality assurance role across the partnership, reporting directly to the primary partnership co-ordinator. The formation of a quality initial teacher training committee, consisting of senior leaders from partnership schools and university personnel, ensures that all underlying weaknesses have been identified and swiftly tackled. They oversee the rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the programme and ensure effective coherence. The university has entered in to a formal partnership with the local authority which contributes significantly to the identification of good schools to support training and the early notification of any schools likely to cause concern.

12. The recruitment and admissions procedures are effective in securing good quality trainees; retention rates are exceptionally high. The selection process is well-structured and thorough, resulting in the recruitment of well-qualified, motivated and articulate candidates. Interview records are completed carefully by each of the selection panels with outcomes scrutinised by the minority ethnic coordinator to ensure equality of opportunity for those applying from under-represented groups.

13. Communication at university and school level has been significantly strengthened so that all in school have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in preparing trainees to teach. Schools have relevant information about trainees' performance from previous placements. However, information sometimes arrives in school too close to the commencement of the placements and so that there is only a short time to assimilate it.

14. Data on trainees' individual progress as well as regular tutorial with the academic tutor ensures that trainees' equality of entitlement is met fully. The appointment of a student at risk coordinator provides effective brokered support for trainees with additional needs. All placements are now appropriate and offer experiences relevant to trainees' individual needs.

15. The opportunities created to provide cross-school moderation and joint observations across cluster schools have been extended. Whilst the university is able to tap in to schools and teachers' expertise, there is scope for university link tutors to identify individual strengths in schools to enhance school based training.

16. The roles and responsibilities of all university tutors and managers are well defined and understood. The partnership draws very effectively upon the expertise of local authority advisers, advanced skills teachers, consultant lead teachers and visiting tutors to contribute to the delivery of the training programme. For example, trainees receive good input developing business enterprise from schools and one partner local authority who are nationally acclaimed for their success in that area.

17. Mentor training is a strength. The training programme is well planned and incorporates a good balance between briefing and training. School-based mentors are much clearer about their judgements against the Standards following the university devised criteria linked to TDA judgements. High quality documentation, which is well referenced to the Standards, supports the school-based training programme.

18. Self evaluation and improvement planning are good and have proved effective in eradicating weaknesses identified during the last inspection. Clear and measurable success criteria are a feature of all strategic planning. Centre-based and university based training are monitored rigorously so that emerging issues in each cohort are responded to rapidly. External examiners and independent moderators provide clear and helpful monitoring advice and the university is proactive in addressing any issues that are raised. Clear, systematic and effective procedures exist to ensure that the assessment of trainees' achievements against the Standards is fair, accurate and consistent.