

The University of Buckingham

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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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 University of Buckingham provides training for teachers employed mainly in independent schools. The training leads to the award of a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE). There are about 90 trainees currently undertaking this PGCE programme. In 2008/09, 15 of these trainees received additional training to enable them to be awarded qualified teacher status (QTS); this reports deals with the provision for these trainees only. The QTS trainees are trained in the following subjects: English, history, mathematics and science (biology, chemistry and physics). All are trained to teach in the 14-19 age range, although many have experience of teaching younger students. These teachers are employed by their schools and are generally in the early stages of their teaching career, with many beyond their first year. The schools are spread across England and often change from year to year as and when they have teachers to be trained. However, a number of schools use the course on a more regular basis.

4. Much of the training is undertaken by the subject-specialist mentor, and other staff, in the employing school. In addition, a specialist tutor makes at least three extended visits during the year. All trainees spend at least three weeks in a second, maintained, school; this includes teaching a wider range of classes. Trainees also have three three-day residential training events at the university. In addition, the university provides high quality administrative support for schools, mentors, visiting tutors and trainees.

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the high success rates
 - the impact of the visiting tutors on trainees' progress
 - the provider's depth of knowledge of each trainee and school, and the support for trainees' personal development and well-being
 - trainees' confidence in their teaching, the rapport they have with their students and the application of their subject knowledge.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- provide trainees with clearer and regular assessment of their overall progress
 - improve trainees' understanding of subject pedagogy
 - develop trainees' deeper understanding of the full range of developments in the 14-19 age range and of the QTS Standards about achievement and diversity.
7. In order to improve the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning, the provider should:
- ensure that all involved in the training are well informed about the priorities for further improvement, with a focus on the outcomes for trainees
 - evaluate the impact of actions through improvements in trainees' teaching.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The large majority of trainees make at least good progress and attain at a good or better level. This progress is a result of an effective combination of trainees' own ability to reflect critically on their practice in order to improve and the training they receive in their schools, from visiting tutors and at the university. The university has a 100% success rate since the programme started; no trainees have left or failed the course. As all trainees are employed by their schools, the university also has a 100% record in trainees securing employment. The provider is very successful in what it sets out to achieve.

9. The trainees are very confident teachers in the context within which they work; they have very good rapport with the classes and students they teach. They have a good understanding of how to teach their subject, and can explain clearly a good range of teaching approaches and how they use them. The trainees have very

good subject knowledge and apply this well to: identify steps in learning to inform their planning; use probing questions to develop students' understanding; and develop high quality teaching resources. They are strongly self-motivated and take full responsibility for their own professional development, although there is variation in how well they evaluate their teaching through its impact on students' learning. A significant proportion of trainees need to further develop these skills. Trainees are well informed about changes to 14-19 qualifications that are relevant to their schools, such as the International Baccalaureate, and changes to the secondary curriculum. They have a largely superficial understanding of developments in vocational pathways and diplomas. All trainees make other valuable contributions to their schools in a wide variety of ways.

10. Trainees read widely about their subject and about research into teaching. They are very strong on knowing how to teach their subject, although they have less understanding of why particular teaching approaches are more effective in their subject. Whilst discussions with trainees indicate that they are fully capable of developing this deeper pedagogical understanding, they are often not supported well in transferring this to their own teaching. This prevents some of those trainees judged to be good from being outstanding. Trainees' opportunities to develop more than a basic understanding of the group of QTS Standards about achievement and diversity are largely limited to the time they spend in the second school. The trainees meet these Standards, but opportunities to develop a deeper understanding through discussions are not exploited fully.

11. The trainees are appointed by their schools and this ensures that they have the potential to become good or better teachers of their subjects. In addition, they are interviewed by the university ensuring that they are capable of meeting the QTS Standards at a good or better level. The criteria used for selection have a clear focus on trainees' potential for teaching. The outcomes of this selection process are used to inform the early stages of trainees' individual learning plans. This analysis has a good focus on subject knowledge, but does not include an early assessment of the trainees' strengths and areas for development in teaching, particularly for those in the second year or a later stage of their teaching career. A good feature of the training is the early discussion between the mentor and the specialist subject tutor to establish priorities for individual trainees.

12. The university deploys the resources it has well to meet individual needs. The trainees are looked after extremely well by their employing schools; excellent attention is given to their personal well-being. All trainees have a specialist subject mentor and have at least one scheduled training meeting each week throughout the training; the focus of each meeting is the individual training plan, ensuring attention is given to monitoring and supporting trainees' professional development. Trainees receive good feedback on their teaching which helps them make progress. They learn a great deal from working with experienced colleagues in their subject departments. This results in their strong understanding of how to teach their subject. In a minority of cases, the records of observations of trainees' teaching and some records of weekly meetings are not completed well. There is no doubt that high quality conversations take place, which lead to the large majority of trainees making at least good progress. However, this weakness in recording does not help these trainees with their own critical reflections on their teaching. Similarly, recorded

targets often lack focus or are not identified at all. As a consequence, a small minority of trainees make only satisfactory progress.

13. All trainees have a specialist visiting tutor; the visits by these tutors have a significant beneficial impact on trainees' progress. The tutors provide high quality feedback and set perceptive and challenging targets for the trainees. The tutors use their visits to provide support and guidance for mentors, and make swift and appropriate interventions when necessary. This means that although there is the inevitable variation in quality across a partnership that changes year by year, this is kept to a minimum and generally does not have an impact on the progress made by trainees.

14. The second placement enables all trainees to have a greater breadth of teaching experience and to develop some understanding of how to teach students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs. The subject mentor always visits and observes the teaching of the trainee during this placement to support the trainee and to monitor their progress; specialist tutors also visit when this can be arranged. The arrangements for these placements are made between the employing school and the placement school. The university provides advice and support if required. As with the employing schools, the schools used for these placements change from year to year, although the support they provide is usually of good quality and makes a positive contribution to the trainees' overall progress.

15. The programme has a well-defined process of providing feedback and reports to trainees on their progress; judgements about trainees meeting the QTS Standards are accurate. Trainees are frequently observed and given feedback on their teaching, the outcomes of weekly meetings are recorded on the trainees' individual learning plan, and a report is completed by mentors and tutors each term. These reports assess trainees against each of the QTS Standards to ensure that all are consistently met. Each individual component of this process aids trainees' progress in particular aspects of their teaching and the QTS Standards. However, the recorded outcomes do not make it easy to evaluate trainees' overall progress. Written lesson observation feedback often does not provide a summative judgement. Weekly meetings focus on specifics and, again, do not provide a summative evaluation of the trainee's progress. The university uses a system of grading each QTS Standard on a five-point scale in the termly report; this adds little value to the quality of feedback to the trainee and there is no interim summary judgement on strengths and areas for development. This lack of a clear and regular summative evaluation of progress prevents some trainees from attaining at the highest level.

16. Residential training events involve a balance of lectures and presentations about a range of relevant educational topics. Trainees find these stimulating and thought provoking. Time is also given for trainees to work in groups, often by subject. However, this time is limited which restricts the opportunities to support trainees' critical reflections on their subject teaching and subject pedagogy. The trainees also value the three assignments and appreciate the opportunity to read and research widely, and to reflect more deeply on teaching. However, the third assignment, which should focus on critical reflection, has one option that allows trainees to miss out on this.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

17. The provider has good capacity to sustain the high quality that exists and to secure the improvements required. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection and these have had a direct impact on improving the progress and attainment of trainees. The cohort is too small and variable in size each year to use overall attainment to identify trends in improvement and the trainees' starting points vary from year to year. However, it is possible to identify improvements in specific areas resulting from actions the university has taken arising from its self-evaluation. This results in the large majority of trainees now making at least good progress and attaining well.

18. Evaluations of all aspects of the provision are undertaken by trainees, mentors and tutors. The outcomes are analysed carefully by the university and this ensures that senior managers know what is working well and what requires improvement. The head of the programme and the programme manager know each trainee extremely well. They keep a careful eye on all aspects of their welfare and professional development. They communicate and liaise with schools very effectively in the best interests of the trainees. This depth of knowledge of each trainee and school is admirable, given the changing nature of the partnership.

19. The meetings of all mentors and tutors at the university at key stages throughout the year are used well to gather information about the quality of the provision and to share ideas. Following each tutor's visit, a written record is completed that requires the tutor to evaluate and comment on the quality of the training in the school; this is clearly based on the impact of the training on trainees and their progress. These reports are used well to provide the required guidance and support, and to intervene if required; for example, where a trainee is not receiving sufficient subject-specific support. This quality assurance role has been introduced since the previous inspection and has had a significant impact on the quality of school-based training. The provider's written self-evaluation does not reflect the quality of this evaluative process. It is very descriptive and, in places, lacks detailed analysis of the outcomes for trainees. This lack of a high quality written self-evaluation means that the outcomes of evaluation cannot be shared fully across the partnership.

20. The university has a clear understanding of the national changes and developments that will have an impact on the training it provides, including developments in 14-19 education, and changes to the secondary curriculum and qualifications. It ensures that trainees are informed about these. However, trainees' understanding of the full range of 14-19 developments lacks depth as a consequence of very limited first-hand experience. The provider expects this experience to be a feature of the second placement, but balancing a range of competing criteria means that this requirement cannot always be met fully.

21. The university copes well with the changing nature of the partnership. It does what it can to ensure that mentors are trained and understand the QTS Standards

and the evidence required by trainees. Visiting tutors play a key role in ensuring that mentors undertake their responsibilities well and they intervene where required. The university makes good use of an extensive knowledge of schools in the sector to identify tutors with the necessary skills and qualities to undertake the role well. The programme manager has a good overview of the partnership in order to plan the deployment of these tutors effectively. The programme manager also receives copies of all reports on trainees enabling the progress of each trainee to be monitored centrally. This is used, together with a discussion with the tutor, to target additional visits to the trainee on the rare occasions where these are required. However, the high quality feedback and targets given to trainees by tutors are not used to supplement the university-based training by exemplifying best practice for mentors, who often have no prior experience of teacher training.

22. The university has responded to all of the points raised in the previous inspection report and each has made a contribution to improving trainees' progress in specific areas. Mentor training, supported by tutor visits, now ensures that all mentors have an understanding of their role. The weekly training meeting between the trainee and the mentor is now focused on the individual learning plan, leading to some improvements in the target setting for trainees. This is a good example of the university's approach of consistency with flexibility: all trainees have a weekly meeting and it follows the pattern of review-plan-train established by the university, but with sufficient flexibility to ensure that this meets the particular needs of the individual trainee at that stage in the programme.

23. The university has an improvement plan that makes absolutely explicit that the success of its actions will be evaluated through one criterion: that trainees' teaching improves to enable them to fulfil their potential. The plan clearly identifies the areas that require improvement. However, it is not clear how the evaluation criterion is translated into the specific evidence identified to evaluate the impact of the actions. The improvement plan is not circulated to schools. This means that they are unclear about the university's priorities for improvement and about their role in securing these.

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?	2
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?	2

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?	3
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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