

e-Qualitas

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Lead inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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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. e-Qualitas Professional Services Ltd is an independent company offering routes to qualified teacher status (QTS) through employment-based initial teacher education. The training is based on a distance-learning model with the overwhelming majority provided in school. e-Qualitas provides guidance and support through tutor visits, a web-based forum and occasional training sessions based in partnership schools. Although schools working with e-Qualitas are predominately in London and the South-East there is a growing number of schools in a wide geographical spread from Essex to Cornwall. Five local authorities recommend e-Qualitas to schools as their preferred employment-based teacher training provider. e-Qualitas commissions Roehampton University to provide quality assurance of both assessments and provision.

4. The provider attracts a very large number of applicants for both primary and secondary programmes. The number of trainees on the course at any one time is variable since trainees may enter training at any point in the academic year. In addition a number of trainees with prior teaching experience are able to complete an accelerated programme. During the academic year 2008/09, a total of 38 primary trainees and 172 secondary trainees will have completed the course. Of these, 95 were self-funded, the majority of whom are working in independent schools. A very small number of trainees are employed in special schools.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the exceedingly skilled leadership that is relentless in its drive to improve provision through thorough evaluation and high quality improvement planning with a strong focus on trainees' outcomes
 - the highly motivated trainees who make good progress and develop very strong professional attributes
 - the excellent communication and relationships between all members of the partnership
 - the commitment and expertise of the visiting tutors and the high calibre of their training
 - the very high recruitment rates for all groups, including those who are under-represented, and the high retention and employment rates.

Recommendations

6. In order to further improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- improve the consistency of high quality school-based training, particularly in relation to subject knowledge and subject pedagogy
 - extend opportunities for all trainees to gain expertise in teaching across the age and ability range for which they are trained.
7. In order to ensure the provision across the partnership is of consistently high quality the provider should
- enhance further quality assurance procedures to evaluate the quality of on-going school-based training.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Pivotal to the success of the programme is the highly skilled management team that is relentless in its drive to achieve its vision of improving the teaching workforce by training high quality teachers. At the centre of this is the exceedingly strong leadership provided by the small management group. Together they are leading the delivery of an increasingly good quality training programme that

meets the diverse needs of the trainees well. As a result, secondary and primary trainees progress well given their starting points. Attainment by the end of the programme is good and for an increasing proportion of trainees, it is outstanding. There is little difference in attainment between either phases or funding routes or subjects.

9. The recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous and result in trainees who are committed and enthusiastic with the potential to be good teachers. There is a very high demand for the funded places and the number of self-funded places has grown substantially as a result of the provider's commitment to train unqualified teachers in schools in challenging circumstances, and independent and special schools. Recruitment levels of all under-represented groups and in shortage subjects are good. Due to the commitment of both the employing school and the trainee and the excellent support from the visiting tutors, withdrawal levels are very low and a very high proportion of trainees secure a teaching position after training. A high proportion rapidly gains promotion.

10. The advice and guidance given to schools and applicants prior to submitting an application are outstanding and ensure that from the outset both have a clear understanding of the rigour and demands of the programme. Applications are carefully scrutinised and provisional offers are followed up by an on-site visit to assess suitability and to design initial training plans. Although recruitment was graded outstanding by the provider, it is judged to be good by the inspection team. This is because although the recruitment and selection procedures and systems are excellent in terms of rigour and initial analysis of trainees' strengths and weaknesses, the evaluation of schools new to the programme is not always rigorous enough. In some cases, this results in trainees not making as rapid progress as they might because of the limitations of their placement school. This is being currently addressed.

11. From the outset, trainees accept shared responsibility for meeting their own needs. They demonstrate very strong professional attributes and in particular have a very good rapport with learners. They build very strong and constructive relationships with colleagues and, regardless of the setting in which they are training, have a high level of awareness of the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Most trainees' planning and teaching skills are strong. They plan a good range of activities to stimulate learners' interest and establish a purposeful and safe learning environment. Primary trainees have a well-developed understanding of how children develop early reading skills. Strategies for the management of behaviour are well developed.

12. The initial training plans are detailed and personalised. They ensure that trainees and trainers have a clear understanding of what training is needed and, in the majority of cases, are used successfully to guide the work of the school-based trainers. Training is highly individualised and the vast majority of it takes place in the employing school. This is regular and conscientiously carried out. Expectations of the school-based trainers are clearly set out and they take their responsibilities very seriously. Their training overall is good with much that is outstanding. Trainees speak very highly of them. Trainees' progress is carefully monitored by both the school-based trainers and the visiting tutors. Trainees receive good quality and

detailed feedback following regular lesson observations. Because of these and the weekly sessions with the school-based trainer, they are generally clear about what they need to do to improve particularly with regard to generic teaching skills. However, sometimes targets are too vague and focus on tasks or organisation. This impedes the progress of a few trainees, particularly those who start from a lower base.

13. At their best school-based trainers facilitate both generic and subject-specific training and weekly training sessions consist of high quality education debate and reflection. However, in a minority of cases trainees' knowledge and understanding of the pedagogy that is required for good and outstanding teaching is less secure and the training in this is unstructured and frequently limited to a focus on the immediate teaching context. This means that some trainees find it hard to articulate a good understanding of the impact of their teaching and activities in the classroom and they do not always make the best use of learning opportunities for pupils.

14. The deployment of the visiting tutors and the quality of their work is a real strength of training. They are exceptionally well trained and know the trainees they work with very well. Trainees benefit not only from their perceptive and challenging observations of their teaching but also from the individualised support and dedicated training that they provide. Their reports are exceptionally detailed and there is an obvious impact on trainees' progress following their visit. When problems occur both the visiting tutors and the e-Qualitas management work quickly to arrange additional support.

15. The six training modules are designed to focus on and explore various aspects of teaching. For most trainees this provides a clear framework around which to develop their planning, teaching and assessment skills in addition to ensuring good coverage of recent educational initiatives, such as the Rose review of reading or 14-19 diplomas. The trainees are supported by high quality guidance and distance learning materials. The 'theory papers' written by experts commissioned by e-Qualitas provide valuable starting points for further reading and research in particular subjects. The monthly meetings and occasional subject meetings are highly appreciated by the trainees giving them both added insight into teaching and an opportunity to network with other trainees.

16. Trainees' second placements complement their main teaching experience by providing a contrasting teaching experience. This is particularly critical for trainees in independent and special schools. Trainees are carefully guided on the focus for the placement in order to ensure that it enhances their development; it frequently proves to be a catalyst to improved confidence and progress. However, in a minority of cases the length, timing or structure of the second placement does not allow for a sufficiently sustained teaching experience in a contrasting setting and these trainees are not always enabled to develop good expertise outside the immediate context of the classes which they are teaching in their main placement.

17. The provider is good at promoting equal opportunities. It closely monitors outcomes for all trainees and trainees know that any concerns will be quickly and sensitively handled. The majority of trainees are well prepared to teach in a

culturally diverse society. However, some trainees have more limited opportunities to develop this aspect of their training.

18. Communication between schools, visiting tutors and the e-Qualitas management is excellent and promotes a common sense of purpose. Schools feel well supported in their training role. School-based trainers benefit from individual mentor training from visiting tutors and all have an opportunity to attend a training day. These are highly valued by schools and in particular enable all trainers to moderate judgements through joint observations. However some school-based trainers, particularly those new to working with e-Qualitas, are less clear about their role in subject pedagogical development.

19. There are very comprehensive systems in place to make final assessments of trainees against the Standards. These are broadly accurate although for some trainees the assessment of subject knowledge is over-generous.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 1

20. Overall the leadership demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve and to take the actions required as and where necessary. Leadership is highly reflective; there is no complacency about the quality of provision and the leadership is constantly seeking ways to improve. Since the accreditation visit there have been many changes to the provision and this is reflected in its successful expansion, the rising completion rate and improving attainment, particularly amongst primary trainees.

21. The leadership team is constantly developing ways in which to gather information to evaluate the quality of training. There is a wide range of systems in place to evaluate both schools' and trainees' opinions about the training. In addition there is much informal evaluation through discussions between visiting tutors, trainees and school-based trainers. The leadership is very responsive and frequently makes immediate small changes to the provision to bring about further improvement. Valuable evaluations have been introduced to gain the views of past trainees. In addition, the leadership team make very good use of network meetings, Training and Development Agency and Ofsted reports, and feedback from tutors who work with other providers to identify points for development. All of these systems support self-evaluation well and mean that leadership has a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision.

22. The self-evaluation document is highly detailed and analytical. It clearly focuses on the impact of provision on trainees' outcomes and there are clear links between evaluation and improvement planning. However, the leadership team has been over-generous in its grading of overall effectiveness in part because it has not applied the Ofsted grade descriptors accurately enough. This does not though detract from the provider's capacity to improve.

23. There are very strong systems in place to evaluate and improve the quality of individual visiting tutor's visits. The quality assurance of the assessment of trainees has several layers and is rigorous and thorough. The highly detailed evaluation from a commissioned university on the quality of final assessments and training provision is particularly good. The recently created policy and practice group is effectively holding the programme management to account and developing the range of systems to evaluate the quality of the provision.

24. e-Qualitas works with a large number of schools, approximately one-third of which are new to the provision. The capacity of a school to provide training is carefully scrutinised both at the point that the application is received and at the initial visit. The quality of school-based training is evaluated at the end of a trainee's training enabling the management team to have a developing understanding of a school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the quality of on-going training is not always systematically evaluated and thus variability in the quality of subject knowledge training for teaching is not always picked up speedily enough, particularly for schools that are new to the provision.

25. The leadership team conducts a detailed analysis of the trainees' outcomes. They carefully use this data to make improvements to the provision. For example, when data suggested that the attainment of men at the highest levels was less strong than for women, a writing task was introduced as part of the pre-course work in order to identify what additional support they would need. Although at an early stage, the introduction of on-entry grades to track trainees' progress is enhancing the provider's ability to monitor provision and improvements.

26. There are many examples of the provider's quick and flexible response to emerging issues in teacher education. For example, the provider took advantage of the change of Standards to adapt and improve their training and assessment procedures and systems. They are continuing to review these systems to take into account the new inspection framework for initial teacher education. The development of trainees' subject knowledge for teaching has been a major priority with an emphasis on providing resources, guidance and training for both trainers and trainees. Although this is still an aspect that some trainees need to develop further, evidence shows that this is much improved compared with previously. The leadership is not complacent and further work on this is central to their plans.

27. The leadership team has a strong grasp of national initiatives and responds in a timely manner. It is adept at taking advantage of the diverse expertise of the large number of visiting tutors to write high quality distance learning modules to develop trainees' understanding of developments such as the 14-19 diplomas, the Rose review and Williams report. In particular, a greater emphasis has been given to making training in developing both primary and secondary trainees' understanding of early reading skills more consistent. Plans are well underway to develop the web-based forum to include 'ask an expert' areas.

28. Improvement planning is well-focused on improving outcomes for trainees both in the short and long term. It is ambitious, forward thinking and fluid. The leadership team and the policy and practice group regularly review and evaluate actions against success criteria that are focused on their impact on the quality of

training and trainees' achievements. The record of improvement is clear and the management recognises that the current improvement priority is to continue to reduce variability in the quality of training provided in the very wide range of schools with which they work.

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

		Employment-based routes
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

	Employment-based routes
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?	1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?	1
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?	1

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.