

Thamesmead School Teacher Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

Thamesmead School
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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 Thamesmead School Teacher Training Partnership comprises eight secondary schools in north-east Surrey. Thamesmead School in Shepperton is the lead school. The partnership has provided an employment-based route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through the Graduate Training Programme (GTP) since 2006 with Designated Recommending Body status awarded in 2003. The partnership has an allocation for 22 salary-funded places in the 11 to 18 age range of which 12 are for shortage subjects. Each year, the partnership recruits trainees to subjects dependent on the needs of its schools and the ability of teaching departments to provide high quality training. In 2008/09, the partnership recruited 18 trainees.
4. The partnership was established to meet the recruitment needs of its schools by offering an alternative route to QTS for potential trainees already living in the area. This was because of the difficulty of recruiting newly qualified teachers in an area of high housing costs. All trainees attend a weekly general professional studies course and have a weekly meeting with their subject mentor to develop their teaching and subject knowledge skills. All trainees attend six subject knowledge training sessions during the programme. All spend five weeks in a second school placement in the spring term.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the strong commitment and involvement of all members of the partnership leading to consistently good and continuously improving training and assessment
 - the outstanding selection procedures that result in the recruitment of high calibre, highly motivated and successful trainees
 - the meticulous quality assurance that leads to highly effective improvement planning
 - the thorough and accurate analysis of trainees' developmental needs that results in highly individualised training plans and very responsive mentoring, contributing to trainees' initial rapid progress
 - the high quality central training that uses the best practice from across the partnership
 - trainees' competence to plan and teach lessons that meet the needs of all pupils.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve further trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- seek ways to sustain the rapid progress that trainees make early in their training to maximise overall attainment levels
 - seek ways of extending trainees' knowledge and skills to teach in a culturally diverse society.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. Trainees' attainment by the end of the training is good. Most trainees demonstrate particularly strong professional attributes. They develop good and purposeful relationships with their pupils and have high expectations for behaviour and achievement in lessons. Trainees benefit from the very strong professional support of colleagues that has enabled them to participate fully in the life of the school as they take on demanding pastoral responsibilities and contribute to after-school activities. As a result of the high quality and insightful feedback from subject mentors, most trainees develop their reflective and self-evaluation skills to a high

standard and are keen to improve the quality of their lessons. However, for a few trainees, the evaluation does not concentrate sufficiently on the impact of teaching on learning.

8. Most trainees demonstrate good knowledge, understanding and application of a range of teaching, learning, assessment and behaviour management strategies that ensure their pupils remain on task, participate well in lessons and make good progress. Most trainees have developed secure subject knowledge as a result of the detailed initial subject knowledge audit and the highly individualised support of the subject mentor. A few trainees with degrees that are not directly related to the subject they teach occasionally have gaps in their knowledge in one of the key stages. In many of the observed lessons, trainees made very good use of the attainment levels of the national curriculum to provide challenge, motivation and progression. Their planning takes account of pupils' prior learning and includes regular change of activity to maintain pace and to provide frequent opportunities for individual, group and peer assessment, including plenaries. They take care to select or develop learning resources that complement their lessons and most make good use of interactive whiteboards throughout the lesson. Those trainees who have pupils with English as an additional language apply their training to good effect to personalise the learning through the well-considered use of first language resources and differentiated worksheets.

9. Selection procedures are outstanding and result in the recruitment of high calibre, highly motivated and successful trainees who exhibit a strong sense of achievement as a result of gaining a place on the programme. Selection reflects the partnership's rationale very well by recruiting local trainees who stay and teach in the area. Selection procedures are extremely thorough and involve all members of the partnership at every stage to ensure transparency and consistency. The partnership measures and moderates all recruitment stages against agreed criteria to evaluate applicants. All applicants in the same subject area teach the same topic for their sample lesson, observed by two subject specialists. At the subject interview, the partnership judges applicants on their ability to evaluate the sample lesson, their subject knowledge and their potential to work with young people. Induction is very effective at introducing trainees to the programme, supported by an excellent trainee handbook, detailed reading list and subject knowledge assignment. All information from the interview including the skills and subject audits forms an integral part of the trainees' detailed individualised training plans, contributing to their rapid progress from the start of the training.

10. The partnership is skilful at placing trainees in a school that best meets their developmental needs. Withdrawal rates are very low and the proportion of trainees gaining employment in the partnership after the training is very high, with many gaining early promotion. Strategies to recruit more trainees from minority ethnic groups have been successful as have initiatives to recruit graduates to shortage subjects, such as mathematics.

11. Training and assessment are good and result in most trainees making rapid progress during the first two terms of the training. Assessment of trainees' skills accurately and thoroughly identifies their strengths and areas for development. All elements of the training combine well to support trainees' progress. Pivotal to this, is

the very responsive mentoring that contributes strongly to the development of the subject pedagogy needed for the lessons they teach. Highly specific and accurate individual training plans link all the trainees' developmental needs to the training. The weekly progress reviews set relevant short-term targets that concentrate closely on the trainees' immediate goals, often following the very detailed feedback from mentors' lesson observations. Trainees benefit greatly from the high quality general professional studies and specific subject knowledge training programme: this responds well to their needs and draws upon the best practice from across the partnership. They quickly acquire the skills needed to teach their subjects and apply behaviour and assessment for learning strategies in their lessons; they learn how to adapt their teaching and linguistic skills to different year groups. However, progress slows for a minority of trainees during the third term despite the very rapid progress made in the first two. Although areas for development remain appropriate and related to the Standards, they often lack specificity and challenge, and concentrate on trainees consolidating their skills rather than moving the trainee from good to outstanding. Lesson observation feedback during this period remains very detailed but does not set development targets beyond the immediate context of the lesson. It does not challenge the trainee to reflect on how the lesson might be planned for different groups of pupils or different levels of ability.

12. The partnership makes efficient and highly effective use of resources. As a result of the skilful deployment of staff from across the partnership, trainees benefit considerably from high quality mentoring and training. Teaching departments are subject to a thorough performance and skills' analysis before they can participate in the programme; this ensures that they have sufficient capacity successfully to support the full development of a trainee. The partnership audits closely how each partner uses its proportion of the training grant to support trainees' development beyond the central training. Trainees also benefit from free text books to support their studies. The partnership makes highly effective use of external consultants to evaluate and raise the quality of lesson observation and mentors' feedback.

13. The extent to which the provision across the partnership is of consistently high quality is outstanding. A strong sense of shared understanding and a common purpose characterise the partnership with a very high level of commitment and involvement from all. Communication across the partnership is excellent and ensures that all understand their roles and responsibilities and how they contribute to trainees meeting their potential. The comprehensive weekly e-mail newsletter provides very clear reminders, updates and guidance for the coming two weeks. Management meetings are regular and lead to the consistent application of quality assurance procedures and improvement planning. The well-planned professional development of mentors and trainers has led to improved outcomes for trainees. Mentors benefit from annual updating, differentiated for new mentors, and well-attended half-termly meetings that focus on trainees' progress and consider the quality assurance feedback from observed mentor meetings.

14. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The partnership has ensured that trainees are secure in reporting discrimination, harassment or bullying incidents. Trainees are aware of their rights and responsibilities and how to resolve problems or raise complaints. For most trainees, the second school placement provides a complementary and contrasting opportunity to teach in schools with pupils from

different socio-economic backgrounds, enabling them to apply a wider range of classroom management skills. Trainees have benefited from generic training in diversity. This training does not always consolidate or extend trainees' knowledge and skills to teach a culturally diverse range of pupils.

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

15. The leadership and management of the partnership demonstrate outstanding capacity for further improvement. Meticulous quality assurance leads to highly effective improvement planning. Programme leadership is assiduous in its endeavour to raise further the quality of provision. Provision for trainees has continued to improve since 2006 with the result that trainees are attaining more highly. Schools in which trainees have secured employment observe that the quality and range of trainees' skills continues to rise each year. The partnership evaluates all aspects of provision carefully. Trainees evaluate every central and subject knowledge training session and complete half-termly reviews on each aspect of the training. Mentors and school coordinators complete thorough annual reviews. The continuous professional development of subject mentors and trainers ensures that all understand clearly their contribution to trainees' outcomes. All internal and external moderators are very clear about their roles and make a valuable contribution to raising standards.

16. Self-evaluation is rigorous and makes excellent use of the analysis of trainees', mentors' and school coordinators' evaluations to judge the quality of provision and identify areas for development. In addition, it draws on the feedback from the quality assurance observations of mentor meetings, the cross-moderation of assignments and the highly evaluative reports of external consultants and examiners. The self-evaluation document accurately assesses the strengths and areas for development of the provision, especially in terms of raising further trainees' attainment. The partnership has implemented through its detailed action plan many of the identified improvements that have already benefited current trainees, demonstrating its very strong capacity to secure improvement.

17. The partnership makes very good use of data to review trainees' outcomes and sets successful improvement targets. For example, the review of trainees' outcomes led to improvements in the recruitment and selection procedures that recruited higher quality trainees and raised trainees' attainment. The partnership compares the trainees' grade on selection to ascertain overall levels of progress at the end of the training. In 2008/09, all trainees made at least expected progress with over half making progress better than expected, given their starting points. The partnership has further strengthened the consistency of its recruitment and selection procedures for 2009/10 by the introduction of a common grading system.

18. Throughout the partnership, the response to local and national initiatives is good. The management team is adept at ensuring that the training remains current and takes advantage of changes and challenges in both education and teacher training. The general professional studies training has been updated to include developments in the Key Stage 3 curriculum and in the teaching of reading and

writing with the result that most trainees can relate this to their teaching. The partnership's implementation of subject knowledge for teaching has improved the identification of gaps in trainees' knowledge and strengthened trainees' individual training plans. It has updated its lesson observation criteria to include a four-scale performance indicator for the quality of teaching which has enabled trainees to gain a more incisive assessment of the quality of their teaching skills. The partnership has been particularly successful in increasing the recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups and to shortage subjects through widening its advertising area to promote the benefits of completing the graduate teacher programme. However, a very small minority of subject mentors are not aware of the most recent national initiatives in their subject or have not ensured that trainees investigate the broader aspects of the curriculum, such as the range of assessment routes available at Key Stage 4.

19. Planning and taking action for improvement are outstanding. Improvement planning is a shared responsibility across the partnership. It strongly focuses on key priorities with very clear lines of accountability for implementation, leading to better outcomes for trainees. The partnership has been particularly successful at identifying areas for development and taking action that cements sustained improvement. The proportion of trainees judged to exhibit outstanding attainment has almost doubled since 2007/08. School coordinators meet regularly with the programme leader to monitor and evaluate progress against planned action. The partnership prioritises resources well to ensure that improvement planning is successful. For example, it extended the number of subject training days per subject from four in 2007/08 to six in 2008/09 as a direct result of feedback from trainees and mentors and this has raised the proportion of high attaining trainees. Improvement planning has ensured that the second school placement adds value to the trainees' experience, enabling them to extend their teaching and classroom management skills; trainees had identified through their evaluations that the quality of experience varied across the partnership. In response, the partnership took action which included better preparation for the placement and a meeting of the mentors from both schools to identify how the trainee would derive benefit from the second school placement. As a result, the second placement now builds on and complements the main placement.

20. Improvement plans identify clear success criteria that are measured through their impact on the quality of training. However, they do not formally link the success of these actions to specific outcomes for trainees. The partnership has identified the need to align improvement planning more closely to trainees' outcomes and has plans in place to evaluate trainees' attainment across specific QTS Standards as a measure of success.

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?	1
	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?	1
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?		2
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.

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