

West Berkshire Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

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Inspection dates
Lead inspector

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by a former and a serving Her Majesty's Inspector 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. West Berkshire Training Partnership is a consortium consisting of the local authority and three schools, two secondary and one primary, with an administrative office in Newbury. Each partner has equal status within the partnership. The partnership offers routes to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through employment-based initial teacher education. There is close liaison between the partnership and the local authority.
4. There are places for twelve primary and twenty secondary trainees in priority and non-priority subjects and the partnership recruits to this number. All trainees are state funded. In recent years, there has been regular oversubscription. Trainees are placed in partnership schools as well as other schools in the area.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths:

5. The key strengths are:
 - the high quality of mentors and the very effective relationship between mentors and trainees leading to high quality outcomes
 - the commitment of schools to the partnership and their willingness to contribute additional resources to the training programme
 - the support given by link managers to help trainees sustain their progress
 - effective quality assurance providing guidance and reassurance to mentors and trainees leading to high quality outcomes
 - the high quality of administration and management ensuring high quality provision that is delivered smoothly and efficiently to the benefit of all those involved in the partnership, including trainees.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider should:
 - provide greater and more formal opportunities for secondary trainees to develop and expand their subject knowledge and understanding, and the range of current educational issues in their subjects
 - ensure that trainees have a sustained experience which will prepare them for teaching in a culturally diverse society; in doing this, ensure that there is clarity of understanding of the difference between teaching in a culturally diverse society and teaching English as an additional language.
 - tighten recruitment procedures to improve even further the quality of trainees in shortage subjects.
7. In order to improve the quality of training the provider should:
 - focus separately on the primary and secondary application of some issues as well as introducing to all trainees important topics such as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good.

9. Trainees' attainment is good overall. Trainees are enthusiastic and share this enthusiasm with learners. This was seen in all subjects and even where attainment is weaker, trainees show real commitment to succeed. A strong feature is trainees' ability to reflect critically about all aspects of their training and to use this to improve their planning and practice. Targets for improvement are very clear as are the trainees' responses.

10. The large majority of trainees consistently teach good lessons, often with outstanding characteristics. Lessons are planned very thoroughly and there is strong evidence of trainees' good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. When there are gaps in trainees' knowledge, they are assiduous in addressing these. This is also the case with the few trainees who more frequently teach satisfactory lessons and who are working hard to improve their performance. There is a real sense that all trainees care about learners and they have a very good understanding of the implications of *Every Child Matters*. They are developing well the use of assessment of learners' progress to inform their teaching and are increasingly skilled at meeting the needs of different groups of learners. Skills in classroom management are secure, including ensuring good behaviour.

11. Trainees' abilities are well respected by local schools. Most of this year's cohort has already found jobs in the vicinity. Recent graduates from the partnership have moved quickly to promoted posts and some have become Advanced Skills Teachers. Most trainees have been given challenging but appropriate responsibilities in the schools in which they are currently working. They have developed their professional role by contributing to team meetings, taking on extra-curricular activities and involving themselves in discussions with parents and outside agencies.

12. Trainees have a good knowledge of the curriculum appropriate to their subject and phase. Primary trainees are well versed in the content and application of recent developments such as the Rose Review of the teaching of phonics and the Williams Report. Secondary trainees have a good understanding of 14 – 19 developments. However, some issues are insufficiently explored because primary and secondary applications are not developed separately and other important topics such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and its implications are not considered by all trainees.

13. The good quality of secondary trainees' subject knowledge and understanding stems largely from the quality of the mentoring provided in schools. In addition, there is specific training devoted to subject issues, including networking within the local authority and membership of subject associations. This provision works well but there are not enough opportunities for trainees to explore new aspects of subjects and related educational issues outside their schools.

14. Selection procedures are rigorous and, this year, have ensured the recruitment of a large majority of high quality trainees. Interviews take place in the partner schools and involve both teachers and centrally-based partnership managers. The procedures have been suitably tightened this year after unsatisfactory primary retention rates last year. Retention rates are now significantly better. Candidates are now made well aware of the demands of the course. Even so, the partnership recognises that there is still scope for further tightening of procedures, in particular, in recruitment for subjects where there is a national shortage of teachers. The partnership has been reasonably successful at attracting candidates from minority ethnic groups but still wishes to attract more. It has suitable plans in place to do this.

15. Most trainees make good or better progress because they are set clear targets that are regularly reviewed and recast. Evidence is collected methodically against the QTS Standards and termly assessments are carefully moderated and endorsed by an external assessor. Records of meetings between mentors and trainees are detailed and well focused.

16. The mentor-trainee relationship is critical in ensuring trainees' progress and its quality is very good. Mentors and the trainees sustain the relationship very well, carefully analysing needs and adjusting trainees' programmes accordingly. In some cases, the relationship is greatly helped by an informal meeting prior to the beginning of the course and also by managing well the transition from the first phase school to the second. The importance of the mentor is also highlighted by their very careful attention to the needs of those trainees whose progress has not been so strong.

17. Another important element in ensuring consistency of training across the partnership as well as trainees' progress is the role of the of the link manager attached to a school by the central administration. Link managers keep a watchful eye on the progress of individual trainees and act swiftly if there is a problem.

18. The quality of training across the partnership schools is good with the core partnership schools demonstrating a very high level of commitment and understanding of quality. Difficulties with a former core school were successfully overcome by suitable support for trainees and by placing them in alternative schools. In this way, quality of opportunity was assured.

19. An important part of the programme for trainees is the second placement and generally, the quality across the partnership is good. The intention is to provide a useful, different experience for trainees. Most trainees and mentors are happy with the arrangement.

20. The training programme for mentors is thorough and ensures that their quality is consistent across the partnership. It provides a clear understanding of the mentor's role, procedures and criteria for making judgements on trainees' attainment and progress. It also gives guidance on how to provide advice. An important element is the opportunity provided at meetings for mentors to share

experiences. The detailed mentor handbook and termly newsletters provide excellent information and support.

21. The use of resources is good. This judgement differs from the partnership's own evaluation that the application of resources is outstanding. Resources are managed very carefully with a clear focus on trainees' outcomes. The partnership is responsive to need and careful decisions are made about competing priorities. A good example of this is the use of the information and communication technology grant to equip all trainees with laptops, electronic handbooks and digital cameras. A positive feature is the substantial financial contribution that schools make to address any shortfall.

22. The partnership promotes effectively equality of opportunity and the elimination of harassment and unlawful discrimination. The close professional relationship between mentors and trainees means that individual training programmes are tailored to trainees' needs and mentors are good at ensuring that trainees are given the right opportunities. There have been no reports of harassment or unlawful discrimination.

23. The partnership is aware of the need to prepare trainees for teaching in a culturally diverse society and undertakes various activities to support this, for example, the use of the local authority's consultant on ethnic diversity. While these activities are valuable to trainees, they have not had sufficiently sustained experience of teaching in schools which fully represent the diversity found in the region and across the country. There is confusion in the minds of some mentors and trainees about the difference between training to teach English as an additional language and training to teach in a culturally diverse society.

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

24. The provider has good capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and has the capacity to ensure further improvement. Last year, three-quarters of trainees were judged to be good or better in their achievement of the QTS Standards. This year, predictions, some of which have already been confirmed, indicate a better overall performance and improvements already in place such as those relating to recruitment and tracking of trainees' progress confirm that this performance is likely to be sustained.

25. Management is in the hands of the strategic management group. Managers work closely with the partnership's governors, all of whom take an active and interested role in the partnership not least because they ultimately employ many of the trainees. The responsible governor is able to give a very clear account of the allocation of resources. The representation of core partnership schools on the governing body together with newsletters to all schools ensures that the basic principles are well understood across the partnership.

26. A good feature of management is the involvement of the local authority, with its knowledge of local schools and the involvement of consultants and advisers who provide useful information, advice, training and other support. A local authority officer is seconded part-time and is a key member of the management team. Management within schools, especially the links between the mentors and teachers with overall responsibility for staff development in schools (including initial teacher education) works successfully. The administration of the partnership is also very effective, something that is widely acknowledged by schools and trainees. Particularly appreciated is the prompt, efficient and pleasant way in which matters are dealt with.

27. The quality of the moderation of trainees' attainment of the QTS Standards is impressive. Trainees' work is assessed at regular intervals throughout the course as well as at the end. The quality assurance assessors, in addition to confirming mentors' judgements provide detailed feedback which is very helpful to trainees.

28. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation is good. Judgements are honest and accurate. Substantial use is made of the questionnaires given to the main parties as well as other evidence. There is regular analysis of trainees' progress which ensures that the link managers can intervene and provide targeted support when necessary. The weakness linked to the evaluation of the quality of schools in the partnership leading to a problem in 2008 has been identified and addressed. The self-evaluation document prepared for the inspection was sharp save only for the section on use of resources which lacked an analysis of funding against outcomes.

29. There is a relevant and pragmatic development plan for 2008 – 11 with some significant innovations. For example, the plan identifies the need to find benchmarking partners, something now achieved through links with two other providers. The plan is reviewed and updated regularly in response to performance data and other evidence, such as the issues raised in the detailed, annual questionnaire completed by trainees at the end of the course. The plan's impact on trainees' outcomes has been significant: for example, improvements in the tracking system have led to more focused advice being given to trainees resulting in their improved performance. Of equal impact has been the improvement in quality of school-based training as a result of moderation and feedback by link managers.

30. The provider anticipates change well; this is reflected in all aspects of training. The course is responsive to the different needs of trainees in addition to the emerging national priorities. Due attention is given to 'the 21st Century Curriculum' which includes all current primary, Key Stage 3 and 14 – 19 developments. All trainees cover national concerns about the quality of teaching phonics; this is supported by follow-up work in schools for primary trainees. Issues such as numeracy, assessment to support teaching and learning, child protection and learning and teaching English as an additional language are also dealt with thoroughly. However, there is scope for refinement, for example by focusing separately on the primary and secondary application of some issues as well as introducing to all trainees important topics such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and its implications. Overall, the partnership is a very busy environment of ideas, innovation and pragmatism.

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?	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?	2
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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