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A secondary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Cambridge works in full partnership with 43 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers Post Graduate Certificate in Education courses in art and design, classics, design and technology, English, English/Drama, history, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, religious studies and science. All courses train teachers for the 11-18 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 240 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 1

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the unanimity amongst trainers, both at the university and in the schools, of what is required to develop excellent teachers
- the recruitment of high calibre trainees, an increasing number of whom come from a minority ethnic background
- the outstanding subject training at the university which enables the trainees to benefit from the latest research and to work with lecturers with a national, and in some cases, international reputation
- the consistent high quality and sophistication of the subject mentoring which reflects a secure understanding of how to develop excellent teachers
- the exceptional support the trainees receive to meet the exacting standards expected of them
- the democratic and highly effective management of the partnership that ensures the active participation of schools in both its day-to-day operation and strategic development
- the outstanding quality of the induction and professional development of mentors and professional tutors and the excellent communication across the partnership which contribute to the coherence of the provision and its very high quality
- the strong commitment to improvement and culture of critical review which pervades the partnership.

Points for consideration

- further developing the training to support pupils with English as an additional language
- increasing the dissemination across the partnership of the many examples of excellent practice.

The quality of training

1. The expectation that trainees will develop as excellent teachers who more than meet the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status underpins all aspects of the training programme. The unanimity amongst trainers, both at the university and in the schools, of what is required to achieve this, is a key contributory factor to the high quality of the training and the excellent progress trainees make. Trainees displayed a very positive attitude towards their future career in teaching and much enthusiasm for their continuing professional development. Reflecting on his progress during the year, one trainee wrote, 'My development as a teacher has been great. The level of support has never failed to amaze me....you have inspired me to become a mentor as soon as possible.'

2. The course structure, which has been modified since the last inspection, enables trainees to quickly gain confidence in the planning and delivery of lessons. Their rapid progress is sustained during the school placements because of the effective arrangements for ensuring that mentors are fully versed about trainees' prior achievements. Subject training at the university, provided by lecturers with a national and, in some cases, international reputation, inspires the trainees and challenges them to think critically about the nature of their subject and how to convey essential concepts in creative and innovative ways to their classes. Sessions reflect the most recent subject developments and research and incorporate the wider professional aspects of the training, such as diversity and the promotion of race equality, with considerable imagination and ingenuity. The training is enhanced by the contribution of mentors in each of the subjects who are seconded to work at the university for a day each week.

3. The subject mentoring in schools is also of a high standard. Mentors, many of whom are former university trainees, have a sophisticated understanding of what is needed to develop excellent teachers and, particularly, of how to build progression through weekly meetings, target setting and the focused observation of trainees' teaching.

4. The school-based professional studies training, further refined since the last inspection and led by each school's professional tutor, has a beneficial impact on trainees. School programmes are very well structured and the training is rated very highly by the trainees. As in the university's subject training, much attention is given by the professional tutors to ensuring that sessions model good teaching practice. Since the trainees are placed as mixed subject pairs or groups within placement schools, the professional studies sessions provide a valuable forum for them to explore the links between individual subjects and to share ideas with each other. They also foster the very productive collaborative relationships that exist between the trainees.

5. Although they find the course very challenging, trainees are exceptionally well supported to meet the exacting standards expected of them. School and university trainers know the trainees well and tailor their provision to meet their individual needs. This includes the careful choice of placement schools and the

highly distinctive training and support in relation to behaviour management and effective learning that trainees can access at any time. The recent introduction of a 'flexible fortnight' towards the end of the programme provides an opportunity for trainees to pursue aspects of their training in further depth. Thus, for example, one trainee is visiting a middle school to consolidate his grasp of the Key Stage 3 mathematics programme of study and another is returning to a placement school to extend her experience of teaching English literature to lower ability Year 7 pupils.

6. The trainees have access to a vast range of resources and engage with this, and electronic discussion fora, throughout their training. Through taught sessions, and the careful staging of the assignments, they learn how to critically review educational research. This contributes to their ability to reflect perceptively on their practice and their strong grasp of subject pedagogy. Trainees and their mentors find the final assignment, based on school-based research, exceptionally challenging, both intellectually and in terms of their time. However, they are also aware of its benefits, particularly in highlighting the value of research for improving professional practice.

7. The concentration, in the early stages of the training, on the development of trainees' teaching capability and the later emphasis on the collection of evidence of their progress means that the trainees engage with the Standards in a meaningful way. Trainees' achievement is assessed thoroughly and accurately. The regular feedback they receive motivates them to rise to the challenge of achieving the Standards. End of placement reports, written by the mentors and professional tutors, are completed to a very high standard. Their comments manifest a deep understanding of trainees' individual strengths and areas for improvement, as do those of the university lecturers in their references to support the trainees' applications for their first teaching posts.

Management and quality assurance

8. The robust selection process ensures that the course recruits very high calibre trainees. Since the last inspection, the number with a minority ethnic background has doubled and is now very good. The course team monitors its recruitment data carefully and, reflecting the university's widening participation strategy, continues to give high priority to its efforts to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds.

9. The membership of the partnership is stable and includes a good range of school types that, together, offer trainees the opportunities they need to achieve the Standards to a high level across the full 11-18 age range. The clarity of the partnership agreement ensures that all parties understand exactly what is expected of them and the university monitors schools' compliance, including the application of their equalities policies, very closely. Decisive action, including the de-selection of individual subject departments or schools, is taken in response to any failure to meet the university's high expectations.

10. The democratic and highly effective management of the partnership ensures the active participation of schools in its day-to-day operation and strategic development. The course manager leads the university teaching team and the overall programme very well. In addition, the subject and professional tutor panels, which are invariably very well attended, enable school-based trainers to contribute to the planning of mentor and professional tutor training and the review and development of the subject and professional studies training. The Partnership Standing Committee is fully representative of the university, schools and trainees and fulfils its responsibility as the main decision-making body very well. It provides a valuable forum for the exchange of views and its work is well informed by the outcomes of the rigorous evaluations of the provision.

11. The outstanding quality of the induction and professional development of mentors and professional tutors, complemented by excellent communication across the partnership, ensures that school-based trainers are very well prepared to fulfil their roles to the high level expected. The central training is carefully planned to provide trainers with a secure grasp of procedures and develop mentoring skills. The inclusion of sessions focusing on current initiatives and research also ensures that school-based trainers are, as one mentor commented, 'at the top of their game'. The initiative to second mentors to work alongside university subject lecturers, although still relatively new, is having a very positive impact. Amongst other benefits, it places practising teachers at the heart of the university's training and mentor support and provides excellent professional development for those involved.

12. The integrity of the partnership is reinforced by the close collaboration between the university and school-based trainers. Regular visits to schools during placements strengthen the relationships between university subject and link lecturers and mentors and professional tutors. They also contribute significantly to the very strong coherence of the provision, the robust quality assurance of the school-based training and the rigour and accuracy of trainees' assessment. The oral and written feedback schools receive following these visits makes a valuable contribution to their self-evaluation and to the professional development of both the mentors and professional tutors.

13. The evaluation of the programme is very thorough and based upon a wide range of evidence. This includes, for instance, the outcomes of inspection, feedback from external examiners, regular surveys of the trainees and school visit reports produced by the university's staff. Consequently, the partnership has an accurate view of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. It rightly recognises, for example, the need to review its current training in relation to English as an additional language. There are many examples of excellent practice, including the use of the flexible weeks, the 16-19 expectations booklet in geography and work with aspiring mentors, but these are not always shared sufficiently within the university team or across the partnership.

14. Despite the assurance of previously having been judged a highly effective provider, there is no sense of complacency amongst any of those involved in the programme. The course manager, in particular, personifies the strong commitment

to improvement and culture of critical review which pervades the partnership. The partnership has responded diligently to the points for consideration from its last inspection and since then has also successfully adapted the course structure and professional studies training. In addition, there have been many other changes to ensure that the content of the training remains at the 'leading edge', particularly in relation to subject knowledge and pedagogy, and that it continues to achieve its aim of preparing excellent teachers.