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A secondary initial teacher training
short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Gloucestershire works in partnership with 50 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in English with drama, mathematics, science, history, geography, art and design, physical education, modern foreign languages and religious education. At the time of the inspection there were 90 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 2

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 Framework.

Key strengths

- the strength and stability of the partnership and the extensive involvement of headteachers
- the good management of school-based training
- the hard work and commitment of subject leaders
- the high quality of trainees' end of placement reports
- the successful efforts made to personalise the training
- the good provision to prepare trainees to teach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Points for action

- ensuring that review and evaluation take fuller account of issues raised by stakeholders and that these issues are systematically addressed through action planning.

Points for consideration

- improving consistency across the partnership so that all practice is equally good.

The quality of training

1. The overall programme is well structured, meets the Requirements and enables trainees to meet the Standards. There is a clear rationale for all elements of the course which are organised into a short period of central training followed by two 'parent' placements in one school separated by a 'twin' placement in another. The strong relationship trainees develop with their parent school, from which a large part of their training is managed, is a significant strength of the course.

2. The content of the central professional preparation programme is up-to-date and is structured carefully to allow trainees to visit key issues which are then revisited later in the programme. The school-based element of this training makes good use of cluster arrangements for an extended range of input. Coverage of the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good.

3. The afternoon each week devoted to subject studies helps the coherence of school and centre-based training. Subject pathways have all been appropriately updated; modules are relevant, well sequenced and progressively challenging, and supported by two well-judged, formally assessed assignments. There are clear links made between central and school-based subject training and the fact that mentors contribute to the central programme supports coherence and strengthens partnership working. Subject training is planned to model good practice and incorporates a range of resources, groupings and teaching styles. Good use is made of visiting practitioners and senior figures in education to enhance the training. The course promotes reflection well particularly in the way it encourages trainees to reflect on the impact of their work on pupils' learning.

4. Trainees receive very good support from school-based trainers and all have regular meetings with training managers and mentors. Trainees also praise the level of support they receive from the departments in which they are based. While the overall quality of mentoring is good, a few mentors do not set or review targets appropriately because the documentation intended to frame and direct this process is confusing. As a consequence, there are a few trainees who do not know exactly how well they are doing.

5. Successful efforts are made to personalise the training. Trainees are carefully matched to their placements and offered opportunities outside normal arrangements, for example experience in special schools. Booster and enhancement courses in mathematics, science and geography are valued by trainees, particularly by those whose first degree is not in the subject they have elected to teach. Trainees' subject knowledge is audited at an early stage and enhanced appropriately throughout the course.

6. All trainers and trainees have a good understanding of the Standards and there are thorough procedures for tracking trainees' progress in meeting them. Trainees receive regular and detailed feedback on their teaching. While a well-structured lesson observation format allows areas for development to be clearly

identified, not all observers are using the forms as well as they might. Trainees evaluate themselves at the end of each placement and also receive detailed reports from their training managers. These reports are invariably of high quality, relating well to the Standards and also giving highly personalised subject-specific feedback on strengths and areas for development.

7. Trainees are assessed regularly and accurately. There are clear expectations that the subject leader will jointly observe each trainee with the mentor in order to moderate judgements. This works well for most trainees but the expectation is not always fulfilled in each subject, particularly when a subject leader has a large number of trainees to visit.

Management and quality assurance

8. The selection process is well managed, with good involvement of partnership schools. Candidates are interviewed in a school by the subject leader and a colleague, usually a subject mentor or the training manager from the school. Candidates complete a number of appropriate tasks, including a writing test, and selection criteria are applied within the context of carefully prepared guidelines. Trainees receive helpful pre-course information with some subjects, but not all, tailoring pre-course tasks to deficits identified at interview. Attendance at a booster course is sometimes a pre-condition of entry and many suitably qualified trainees opt to take courses as a way of further enhancing their subject knowledge.

9. Most subjects recruit to their target numbers but the course leadership acknowledges that more needs to be done to broaden the recruitment base. There are a number of initiatives, including targeted recruitment events and taster days, but few trainees from minority ethnic groups are enrolled. Partnership headteachers are very pleased with the quality of trainees they have employed and who often make up a high proportion of their teaching staff.

10. The extensive involvement of headteachers makes the partnership exceptionally strong. Its principles and rationale are understood by all stakeholders and are reflected in all the arrangements. The partnership is characterised by a high degree of stability. That so much of the day to day work is successful is in large measure the result of good, often long standing, relationships between schools and between schools and the university. This contributes strongly to the good quality training.

11. There are a number of well established committees which have good oversight of the working of the partnership. Trainers and trainees are well represented at different levels of management and contribute to routine decision-making. Key to the functioning of the partnership is an effective executive committee, made up of headteachers and university staff and chaired by a headteacher. High quality summer course conferences enable key players to get together to reflect on the previous year and to plan for the future.

12. The management of training in schools is of a very high quality with the support of headteachers a key contributory strength. A training manager in each placement school effectively manages the placement, assessing and acting as tutor to the trainees and assuring the quality of the training. While mentoring overall is good, arrangements differ significantly between schools. When trainees embark on their second placements in January, parent placement mentors do their best to keep in touch and many make a visit during the placement.

13. Subject leaders carry out their training roles effectively. Most are also teachers in schools, released for one day a week to perform their training role. They work very hard on behalf of their trainees and often contribute more than their prescribed hours.

14. Communications across the partnership are excellent. However, the university's virtual learning environment (VLE) remains an underused resource and a partnership VLE is under development. When difficulties arise, course leaders are quick to respond and schools praise the speed and effectiveness with which matters are dealt.

15. Appropriate quality assurance systems are in place. A particular strength is the innovative deployment of a team of headteachers to visit schools and report back on the quality of training. Training managers, course leaders and subject leaders all have a quality assurance role which they exercise well but with varying degrees of effectiveness.

16. The views of stakeholders are systematically sought. Schools, trainees and trainers feed back to the university their views on a regular basis and trainees' representatives from each subject pathway meet regularly with the course leader to raise issues on behalf of their subject group. This information about the quality of the course is used well to bring about improvement although it does not always find its way into improvement plans. The current self-evaluation document is descriptive rather than evaluative and does not focus enough on issues raised by stakeholders. The lack of clear lines of accountability for subject leaders constrains action planning at subject level. The partnership executive committee is aware of these inconsistencies and is taking appropriate action, including the introduction of a three year strategic plan.

17. The external moderation of trainees' outcomes is good and is being enhanced by the engagement from 2008 of subject specific external examiners.