

University of Sussex

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A secondary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Sussex works in partnership with 106 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers 11-18 training in English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and science and 7-14 training in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. At the time of the inspection there were 139 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 Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the selection procedures which result in the recruitment of good quality trainees in all subjects
- the planning of training around the professional studies course in order to link the content and timing of school practice
- the use made of visiting speakers and school-based staff in both subject sessions and professional studies
- the stable partnership with schools, supported by good communication systems.

Points for action

- improving target setting and action planning to ensure that all trainees are supported fully in making progress towards meeting the Standards.

Points for consideration

- ensuring that all trainees understand and follow guidance about the range of evidence that they should present to indicate their progress in meeting the Standards
- ensuring that all subject action plans draw on an analysis of evaluation data and that all plans are sharply focused on improving the training and outcomes for trainees.

The quality of training

1. The structure and content of the training programme meet the Requirements and are carefully planned to ensure trainees meet the Standards. Documentation is thorough. Both curriculum and professional studies aspects of university-based training have been updated to take account of current educational issues, the new Standards and feedback from trainees and school-based staff. The first serial placement gives trainees suitable support from curriculum tutors and from one another on the one day a week that they are at the university. This day also allows the development of pedagogic skills which can then be applied in a school context. The integration of the 7-14 and 11-18 courses helps to develop trainees' understanding of progression in pupils' learning.

2. A strong partnership, supported by effective communication systems, ensures that there is good coherence between school and university-based aspects of the course. The university and school staff plan their programmes effectively around the professional studies course in order to link both content and timing. This is particularly valuable in schools' programmes during the trainees' first school experience. Mentors are invited to be involved in all aspects of training including interviewing, marking the special study and exit tutorials. Presentations, school-based tasks and assignments support trainees' development of classroom skills and encourage them to link theory and practice. In addition, assignments encourage reflection, build on and support key subject issues and professional studies.

3. The quality of university-based training is good in both curriculum and professional studies, with tutors' enthusiastic and showing up-to-date knowledge. Very good use is made of visiting speakers and school-based staff in both subject sessions and professional studies. The virtual learning environment has potential for further development. In schools, trainees value the experience, enthusiasm and commitment of the majority of mentors. Trainees receive detailed, helpful oral feedback from lesson observations. Written feedback does not always reflect the quality of the conversations that have taken place, nor the good quality of the overall support.

4. Trainees value the individual support that tutors provide through personal tutorials. They are encouraged to take responsibility themselves for ensuring that the course meets their needs but, because both relationships and communication with staff are very good, help is always available if it is needed. Thorough systems are in place to support trainees who give cause for concern. During selection, differences in trainees' previous experience and subject knowledge are explored and some are required to attend booster or enhancement courses. At the start of the course, trainees write a reflective educational autobiography, followed up with a comprehensive self-audit. These help staff to allocate a suitable first placement and identify appropriate additional support, but are not regularly shared with mentors nor used systematically for action planning.

5. The guidance and grade descriptors supplied to mentors in the course handbook give clear direction, enabling mentors to make accurate, consistent judgements against the Standards. A professional practice profile gives a detailed overview of trainees' work and is an efficient mechanism for collating their progress. This documentation is taken to the second school experience and is used to plan the trainees' programmes, but this good practice is not followed by all. Trainees have useful one-to-one reviews with curriculum tutors as well as meetings each week with mentors. However, some opportunities are missed for a minority of trainees to link targets from observations of lessons to the Standards and to focus more explicitly on developmental objectives.

6. A professional development portfolio provides a good record of trainees' progress, including evidence of progress towards meeting the Standards. Trainees are not clear on grading the quality of their evidence and where it should be stored. Guidelines about gathering evidence are not always followed.

Management and quality assurance

7. Selection procedures are effective, with good involvement of partnership schools, and result in the recruitment of high quality trainees. The selection process includes a broad range of relevant, subject focused activities and has been recently revised to improve consistency across all subjects. Pre-course subject guidance is useful and, in some subjects, letters to trainees are personalised, for instance to reflect prior experience.

8. In 2006-07 targets for recruitment were met except in science and modern foreign languages. The course leadership has made good efforts to meet targets where there was a shortfall in 2007 and this is already showing success. The recruitment targets set by the Training and Development Agency for black and minority ethnic trainees have been achieved for the last three years.

9. The management of the course is effective and supports good quality training and outcomes. The Sussex Consortium Steering Committee and the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) Management Group, membership of which includes both university and school representatives, are effective in making management decisions and supporting developments in the course. Regular student consultation meetings enable trainees to be involved in influencing the course provision and providing regular feedback of trainees' views.

10. There is a strong, stable partnership with schools. A comprehensive partnership agreement document, which is reviewed annually, clearly details entitlements, roles and responsibilities. In schools, most professional tutors and mentors carry out their training roles well. Good documentation and very effective communications supports them.

11. There is regular training for new and experienced mentors. Some of the training sessions include a good balance of briefing and training. Mentors do not

consistently attend training in some subjects, and this has contributed to the variability for a few trainees in the quality of target setting. Action is being taken to rectify this for 2008-09. Curriculum tutor visits to schools include joint observations of trainees with mentors; these provide further mentor training opportunities.

12. There are effective procedures in place to moderate the assessment of trainees' performance and progress. Joint observations of trainees by curriculum tutors and mentors are always undertaken. A recent initiative at the end of the course, an interview focused on trainees' professional knowledge, enables university and school-based tutors to confirm that each trainee has sufficient evidence to meet the Standards.

13. There are detailed procedures to ensure that the university's equal opportunities and race equality policies are followed. Input from a consultant provides trainees with individual support and enables tutors to be informed of particular issues emerging during school experiences. Trainees are made aware of the opportunities they have to obtain support and to report any issues that do not meet the university policy requirements.

14. Systems for monitoring the quality of the training are effective in picking up issues and addressing them. All tutors are involved in peer observation focused on the quality of university-based training sessions and feedback to trainees in schools. Curriculum tutors monitor the quality of school-based training during regular school visits. A good aspect of the evaluation process is the work of the partnership co-ordinator who visits all schools and interviews school-based tutors, reviews training provision and interviews trainees. The outcomes are used to identify strengths in the school-based training and areas for further development.

15. Trainees are given regular opportunities to evaluate both school-based and university-based training. Mentors and partnership tutors have good opportunities to provide informal feedback on the effectiveness of training during mentor training sessions and partnership tutor meetings as well as during curriculum tutor visits to schools. In order to strengthen this further, a more systematic approach to enable all mentors and professional tutors to evaluate the training is being introduced. External examiner reports are of variable quality, the best providing advice on how to improve the courses. Detailed analysis of both internal and external data is used effectively as part of the quality assurance procedures and to inform developments.

16. The annual monitoring report is based on a detailed analysis of all available evaluation data including external examiner reports. The report identifies strengths in the provision as well as providing a basis for the following year's action plan. Subject annual reports, however, are inconsistent in quality and include little analysis of data. Although subject and course action plans include priorities for improving the training, success criteria focused on driving up the quality of training and improving the outcomes for trainees are not included.