

Colchester Teacher Training Consortium

A secondary initial teacher training
full inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
John Williams HMI

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Introduction

The Colchester Teacher Training Partnership works in partnership with fourteen schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses for the 11–16 age range. It offers post graduate certificate of education (PGCE) and qualified teacher status (QTS) in English, mathematics, science, physical education (PE), modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. At the time of the Standards visit there were 27 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 full 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

Standards achieved by trainees: Grade 2

Quality of training: Grade 2

Management and quality assurance: Grade 2

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

Key strengths

- the commitment of time and energy by all in the partnership, which results in a strong sense of collegiality
- the management and leadership across the programme
- the quality of training, both central and school-based
- the targeting of resources to support weaker trainees
- trainees' lesson planning, which focuses on objectives and learning outcomes
- trainees' use of a wide range of teaching styles.

Points for consideration

- providing trainees with timely feedback on their first assignment so that weaker trainees can use this to improve their subsequent work
- addressing the variability in the quality of targets set in the mentor meetings.

Standards achieved by trainees

1. Trainees are confident in their own ability and make a strong contribution to the life of their placement schools, quickly building professional and positive relationships with pupils. They are approachable, professional, listen to pupils' comments and value their responses. They never raise their voices. They engage all pupils in class discussion; physical education trainees do well to encourage reluctant pupils to contribute. Trainees work cooperatively with other staff in schools, although some have had relatively little opportunity to demonstrate that they can work with teaching assistants. They attend staff meetings and subject departmental days and this helps them to become effective members of the subject team. Trainees are well liked by their colleagues and many eventually obtain substantive teaching posts in their placement schools.
2. Trainees evaluate the teaching of others and use this to inform their own practice. The vast majority are good at evaluating their work; many do so in great detail with an appropriate focus on whether or not their approach to teaching the subject was successful. As such, they are able to critically evaluate their lessons and accurately identify key areas for improvement. Occasionally, reflective writing in their 'diary' is sparse, particularly toward the end of the training year, but some is exemplary and shows good insight into teaching and learning.
3. Trainees have a good knowledge of their subject and the best, for example in mathematics, have researched topics in some depth in order to apply this to their teaching, although this is not always reflected in their written assignment work. Trainees answer pupils' questions confidently and are able to use ICT appropriately to help them teach. All understand the National Curriculum in their subject and National Strategies and know which resource to turn to if they need to develop their knowledge. Their understanding of a range of behaviour management strategies is good.
4. All trainees are aware of the *Every Child Matters* agenda and those teaching PE are particularly strong at safeguarding children and bringing health related matters into practical activities. Mathematics trainees differentiate well and are able to debate the appropriateness of a three part lesson. All trainees, whatever their subject, make good attempts to differentiate their work and develop a good understanding of personalised curriculum. There are opportunities to address the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and trainees develop these skills effectively. However, they are not so good when explaining how to target work at minority ethnic groups for whom English is an additional language. Trainees understand well the needs of more able pupils or those who are gifted and talented.
5. Lesson planning is a particular strength and is done in great detail, with a focus on objectives and learning outcomes. Lessons have a clear structure that addresses progression well. Resources are allocated appropriately, often imaginatively, with ICT trainees not being afraid to teach lessons completely away from computers when it is appropriate to do so. Potential health and safety issues are identified and addressed.

6. Trainees create a calm and purposeful working environment. Overall, pupils' behaviour is managed well. Trainees have an impressively wide range of teaching skills; in ICT thorough training has given them the confidence to use exciting and imaginative teaching strategies. Trainees actively engage pupils in learning and create a safe environment, especially in physical education, where they show great consideration for pupils who face difficulties in some aspects of the subject. Mathematics trainees are good at providing practical equipment for pupils to use and are able to subtly change the direction of the lesson as needed.

The quality of training

7. The structure of the course is good. There is balance and coherence between general professional studies and subject studies. The subject content of courses is good overall, being relevant, balanced and appropriate for the 11-16 age range. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed successfully. For example, modern foreign language trainees now get experience of two foreign languages. There have also been improvements in the content of other subject courses but the opportunities presented by the Key Stage 2 placement for current trainees have not been fully maximised. For example, in modern foreign language, trainees visited primary schools that did not teach a language. This has been improved for future cohorts with a well thought out revision to the primary school placement programme.

8. The central subject training is good. This is consistently delivered in a way that models good teaching and uses a range of external expertise. A good balance is achieved between theory and advice on how to teach the subject. There is a strong focus on *Every Child Matters* outcomes and the national strategies. These are taught within a national perspective which ensures trainees' familiarity with issues of diversity and achievement. Subject audits are followed up well and new procedures are in place for next year to bring subject knowledge and pedagogy together in a coherent training plan. However, trainees' evaluations of their teaching and their reflective writing contain considerable overlap, and whilst being very useful this contributes to the large amount of paperwork that some trainees find daunting.

9. The cohesion between all parts of the training is good. There is clear guidance to schools on developing links between the different elements of the training programme. Relationships with partnership schools are a strength and appropriate training is in place for school mentors and professional tutors. Lead subject mentors and assistant lead mentors are good. They successfully apply their extensive knowledge of schools to the allocation of trainees to placements. The use of expertise from partnership schools in subject enhancement sessions reinforces subject knowledge well. School based subject training is mostly good and some of it is outstanding. The vast majority of mentors are very committed to the partnership and skilful in providing not only good quality support for trainees, but also suitable challenge. Targets are often effectively used, with the best of them focussed on improving practice. These are helpfully linked to Standards, are specific and clearly related to learning outcomes from lesson observations. However, variability remains

and sometimes targets are in place for too long or are focussed mainly at trainees obtaining experience rather than on how to improve their performance.

10. The marking of assignments is good. It is very detailed and accurate and the feedback provided is helpful for trainees. However, the delay in the return of the first assignment, prior to handing in the second, does not help weaker trainees to improve the standard of their work.

11. Assessment structures and systems are good overall and final assessment is accurate. Trainees are assessed against all the Standards. This is largely completed by subject specialists, through both formal and informal observations, providing the trainees with a range of good quality, informed feedback. The best feedback refers carefully to specific Standards, identifies helpful improvement points and is subject specific. This is most prevalent in the second placement. A significant number of joint observations are completed, which ensures consistency of judgements. The role of the professional tutor, previously noted as variable in its impact, is now used more effectively to support training, particularly in following up whole school issues, helping trainees to make sense of general professional studies sessions and planning post 16 experience.

Management and quality assurance

12. Recruitment to the partnership is good. There are marketing strategies in place that are effective in noticeably increasing applications from black and ethnic minority groups. Candidates go through a series of interview procedures to test their ability and aptitude to become teachers, with the partnership assessing candidate's performance at each stage. Some are offered conditional places subject to further school experience or a demonstrable improvement in subject knowledge, and many take up subject enhancement courses prior to the course beginning. Recruitment and selection is rigorously monitored, including for equal opportunity and race equality.

13. The partnership is managed well. There is very effective direction provided by the consortium director and support by the administration team. Communication is very good between the member schools and the centre. A key strength lies in the collegiality of the schools, the mentors and the headteachers. Their commitment of time, leadership and expertise to the partnership is immense. Attendance at meetings is very good and decisions are made swiftly for the benefit of trainees and schools. For example, when a school was failing to provide quality mentoring, the subject department was deselected and the trainee quickly moved to another partnership school.

14. Strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of the partnership are known to management and where additional expertise is available it is used well in the training and assessment programme. For example, the partnership was struggling to identify suitable subject leadership in ICT from within the partnership schools and therefore employed the local authority consultants to great effect. As a result, the quality of

training to teach this subject is now good and much improved from the time of the previous inspection.

15. Throughout the partnership there is a strong focus on turning those trainees judged as satisfactory into good teachers and supporting weaker trainees to meet the Standards. Resources are targeted very well at this and there is a clear rationale for allocating other resources. Retention on the course is therefore good. Training for those who deliver the training programme has been good and effective. Lead subject mentors are managing their subject routes well and have a good view of the quality in schools. They understand the impact of their training because they visit trainees in other schools to quality assure their teaching and files. Professional tutors make a strong contribution to coordinating the activity in their schools and take a full part in quality assuring the trainees and their training experiences, though some do this more consistently and effectively than others.

16. Quality assurance is much improved from the time of the last inspection and is now good. A range of moderation visits are undertaken by professional tutors, subject mentors, lead subject mentors and the consortium director throughout the year. These ensure that judgements about the trainees' performance are accurate. The quality of training is also monitored well, for example joint observations between various members of the partnership provide useful feedback for trainers, including central trainers.

17. During the year the partnership introduced more effective systems for trainees to evaluate the central training so that emerging issues could be dealt with swiftly. In addition it has begun to benchmark provision both internally and against national newly qualified teacher surveys so that outcomes are being used to modify the training plan for the next year. The partnership supplements the external examiner's report well with a rolling programme of subject reviews. These inform subject and partnership development plans so that strategic direction and improvement planning are good.