

Merseyside and Cheshire Graduate Teacher Programme Consortium

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

Room A210
The Heath Business and Technical Park
Runcorn
Halton
WA7 4QX

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Lead inspector

Mark Williams HMI

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors 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. The Merseyside and Cheshire Graduate Teacher Programme Consortium was established in 2002 and received accreditation in 2005. It is a partnership of eight local authorities, two universities and, in 2008/09, approximately 60 schools serving a wide range of socio-economic communities. The provider offers employment-based routes leading to qualified teacher status. In 2008/09 there were 27 trainees on the primary course and 31 on the secondary course. The secondary shortage subjects of mathematics, science, Spanish, information and communications technology (ICT), music, religious education and design technology are offered alongside other non-shortage subjects.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:

- the overall outstanding professional attributes demonstrated by trainees
- the good quality recruitment and selection arrangements which ensure the large majority of trainees to have the potential to become good or outstanding teachers
- the overall good quality training, particularly the way central training makes good use of a wide range of expertise to enable trainees to respond well to national initiatives
- the commitment of the range of partners which enables trainees to make good progress in meeting the Standards
- the trainees' high levels of satisfaction demonstrated through excellent retention rates.

Recommendations

5. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider/partnership should:

- ensure feedback from lesson observations and the resulting targets that are set are more sharply focused on outcomes for trainees and their pupils
- better inform trainees about the progress they are making, particularly the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching.

6. In order to improve the consistency in the quality of training across the partnership the provider should:

- consider introducing a common core of training in all schools, for example to broaden the range of experiences for trainees so they are fully prepared to teach in a diverse society.

7. In order to strengthen the management's assessment of performance the provider/partnership should:

- ensure its development and action plans make clear its expected outcomes for trainees and trainers and, when checking the success of such plans, separates the roles of personnel responsible for actions, monitoring and evaluation.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the Merseyside and Cheshire Graduate Teacher Programme Consortium in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Overall trainees make good progress in reaching the QTS Standards.

9. Trainees' attainments, overall, are judged to be good. During the course of the inspection many positive features were observed. These include trainees making good use of resources, including ICT, in their teaching. They plan well and structure lessons to include a range of activities. In addition they demonstrate outstanding professional attributes; for example, they form excellent working relationships with colleagues and are able to create a classroom atmosphere where pupils work comfortably together. Trainees demonstrate an ability to reflect well on their teaching. They take responsibility for their own professional development, for example through seeking out additional experiences in their placement schools. Primary trainees show a good awareness of how to develop pupils' key skills through work in other subjects. The strongest trainees use a range of assessment methods well to help pupils to feel involved in their own learning, and cater well for the full range of abilities in the class.

10. Nonetheless, the inspectors' judgement of good differs from the provider's assessment of outstanding. This is because inspectors, when scrutinising evidence including trainees' files and observing them in schools, disagreed with approximately 30% of the provider's assessments of the trainees. Some of these trainees were indeed outstanding; however some were less secure in their teaching, for example, lesson plans did not always cater for the full range of pupil needs in a class or did not make clear what pupils were to learn; instead they listed tasks pupils were to complete. While, overall, trainees reflect well on their teaching, some assessed to be outstanding were less rigorous in their ability to analyse their own performance. For a few trainees, particularly in secondary schools, their subject knowledge is less well developed. Nonetheless, inspectors are confident that the overall attainment is no less than good.

11. The provider's arrangements for recruitment and selection are good. From the very early stages potential trainees are given every opportunity to shine. The interview process is enhanced by the presence of experienced serving headteachers. However, secondary trainees may not always benefit from the presence of a subject specialist. Trainees accepted to the course are quickly provided with a summary of strengths to enhance and areas to develop. This means trainees get off to a good start to their induction and training and this enhances the potential for the large majority of them to become good or outstanding teachers. Other sure signs of the good procedures are trainees' high levels of satisfaction demonstrated through excellent retention rates, and their very high employment rates, particularly in local and partnership schools. The provider's recruitment of men into primary education is broadly in line with sector averages. The recruitment of minority ethnic groups has been below sector averages in the last three years but, for 2009/10, is broadly in line with regional figures.

12. The extent to which the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential is good. Effective improvements have been made to centre-based training, not least in the way it makes good use of a wide range of expertise to enable trainees to respond well to national initiatives. This year, the taught programme has been revised to take into account previous trainee concerns. These concerns are no longer evident and, as a result, current trainees show higher levels of satisfaction across the board. In addition, trainees report they benefit from mixed phase sessions. However, the relationship between the central training and how this is followed up in schools is, on occasion, tenuous.

13. The overall quality of school-based training is good. There are some examples of excellent training and assessment but there is also some inconsistency which prevents the overall quality from being outstanding. School-based tutors are very committed and most carry out roles well offering very good support. In the best cases school-based tutors model excellent practice or immerse trainees in it so that high expectations are the norm. In addition, experiences across the school and beyond build well on each other so that trainees develop a range of teaching styles and meet the needs of different pupils well.

14. Some school-based mentors demonstrated best practice by evaluating the quality of trainees' teaching well, and setting precise targets for improvement. Inconsistencies, however, mean this is not always the case and for a very few trainees weekly review meetings do not take place as often as the provider demands. On occasions, such meetings do not include any evaluative comment about the quality of the trainee's progress. There are examples of excellent assessments of trainees carried out by school-based tutors but there are some which are vague or written as tasks to do or are not followed up. In addition, the quality of feedback to trainees about lessons taught is variable. Consequently, the partnership's information about trainees' performance and progress is not always sufficiently precise and trainees are not always fully informed about how well they are doing and how to improve. Trainees' subject knowledge is developing via the subject knowledge tracker. This is an improved system on last year but, at this stage of its development, is geared to trainees only and not outcomes in terms of teaching and learning.

15. The extent to which the provider uses available resources effectively and efficiently is good. Trainees have access to high quality resources in their schools. The provider makes good use of specialist secondary schools and a local special educational needs school. Some trainees, however, are not prepared so well to teach in multi-cultural settings because they have fewer opportunities to gain practical experience. Good use is made of appropriate personnel to deliver taught elements. Trainees appreciate the resources provided for them at taught sessions and also various web-links. Pre-course tasks provide useful and helpful resources.

16. Provision across the partnership is of good quality as seen through the overall good quality training and positive trainee outcomes. The strong commitment of the range of partners enables trainees to make good progress in meeting the Standards. The partnership agreement and associated high quality documentation makes expectations clear to schools. However these procedures are not always followed and, despite clear strengths, there is some inconsistency across the partnership.

Examples of this are seen in the way school-based tutors carry out their roles. Where practice is strongest schools are very proactive in training and seek many opportunities to extend trainees' breadth of experiences; in some schools such opportunities are mixed. While training is suitably individualised, there are currently missed opportunities to ensure greater consistency across the partnership by offering a common core of training for all schools, for example by ensuring all trainees are fully prepared to teach in a diverse society.

17. The way in which the provider promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and eliminates harassment and unlawful discrimination is good. There are strong features not least in the way trainees value the provider's excellent and prompt response to concerns raised. However it is not judged to be outstanding because not all trainees are prepared fully to teach in a modern diverse society and the impact of the provider's policy on equality has not been evaluated.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 3

18. The extent to which the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes is assessed by the provider to be outstanding. Inspectors judge it to be satisfactory.

19. The provider, through its clear documentation, presented a case for it to be outstanding in its overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve. However while it is clear there are some significant strengths, the provider does not monitor provision as thoroughly as it maintains. As a result there is some over grading of trainees and an over generous view of its overall performance. The provider clearly seeks to involve all stakeholders and is responsive to their views. This has led to good improvements in this year's taught programme and some good plans for next year, including 14-19 opportunities. However, wider involvement in evaluating effectiveness, while not inadequate given the positive outcomes for trainees, is more limited. There are several examples why this is so. Firstly, while schools are asked for their views, in a recent survey only seventeen responded. Secondly, discussions which take place do not always record clearly outcomes for trainees or inconsistencies in training. In addition, some key priorities, for example the approval and evaluation of the provider's policy for equal opportunities, have slipped behind time. Also, while the provider's development plan is appropriate it highlights, for example, that the management group is responsible for some actions and for monitoring and evaluating those same actions. Nonetheless, the provider's monitoring and evaluation are effective. For example, the quality of schools in the partnership is kept under regular review. Currently, nearly three-quarters of schools active in the partnership have been judged by Ofsted to be good or better. The provider makes good use of inspection reports and also of local knowledge to identify where quality may be dipping. Where this occurs it acts swiftly and decisively. Overall though, despite strengths, it is on balance the relative weaknesses which have contributed to the provider overestimating its performance in all areas and make the effectiveness of the management at all levels in evaluating performance in order to improve or sustain high quality satisfactory.

20. The role of quality assurance tutors and external quality assurance tutors help the provider moderate the accuracy of school-based tutor assessments. Inspectors agree with the majority of moderations and where there is disagreement it is around the outstanding/good boundary. The pass/fail boundary is secure.

21. The way the leadership at all levels anticipates change, and prepares for and responds to national and local initiatives is good. Trainees are positive about this year's programme. Previous trainee concerns regarding being insufficiently aware of national initiatives and how they impact on teaching have been overcome and trainees are more positive this year. Nonetheless, current primary trainees believe the provider could do more to improve knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good plans are in place to improve next year's programme, particularly in relation to 14-19 developments. In addition, discussions have already taken place to support recent developments in the primary curriculum. The involvement of a leading literacy school is beneficial although attempts to prepare trainees for growing minority populations in the locality are moving more slowly.

22. The effectiveness of the provider in planning and taking action for improvement is judged to be good. The priorities identified are appropriate. Improvements are evident in current courses and, despite some inspector disagreement, in the growing proportion of outstanding trainees. However, the success criteria the provider uses are lists of tasks to be completed rather than outcomes for trainees and trainers. This makes it difficult for the provider to monitor and evaluate the success of its plans.

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?		3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		3
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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