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A further education teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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The inspection

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the *Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers* and the guidance in the *Handbook for the inspection of initial training of further education (FE) teachers*, both published in September 2004.
2. It was conducted in two phases by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by two specialist Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated part-time pre-service and in-service provision offered by Southgate College and validated by Middlesex University. During the first phase in November 2007, inspection focused on the quality of training and the management and quality assurance procedures. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievements of trainees by observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress throughout the course. This phase was completed in June 2008.

Background

3. Middlesex University validates the part-time provision to Southgate College. The college has responsibility for teaching and resourcing the courses and for the assessment of trainees. The university retains overall responsibility for quality assurance and academic standards. The programmes are endorsed qualifications and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers in post compulsory education and training (PCET).
4. The first year, level 4 course incorporates the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) and the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) qualifications, which are being run for the first time. The second year, level 5 Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) is a legacy course in its final year. During the academic year 2007/08, 41 trainees enrolled on the PTLLS/CTLLS courses and 25 on the second year of the Cert Ed course.

Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees make good progress in improving their teaching practice. They produce work of a very high standard. They demonstrate significant commitment to their own students' progress and achievement, by planning and using a wide variety of activities to meet their needs. The training programmes are well-balanced and integrate effectively the taught and workplace elements, theory and practice and the generic and specialist subject components. The assessment of trainees' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills was late, but teacher trainers have taken actions to remedy this for 2008/09. Mentoring for Cert Ed trainees is very good and supports the cohesion of generic and specialist subject elements very well. Teacher trainers are very experienced and competent. The quality of their training is high

and is further enhanced by the contributions from guest speakers. Teacher trainers provide very good support to their trainees, whilst expecting them to become self-reliant and to achieve high standards. They assess trainees' work very thoroughly. The use of individual learning plans (ILP) is underdeveloped. The rigorous quality assurance systems and the very close liaison between university and college staff support continuous improvement in the quality of provision. The promotion of the training to communities under-represented in teaching in the further education system sector is not well-established. Trainers and trainees make insufficient use of the university's resources.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- high standard of trainees' work
- high levels of trainees' commitment to improve their students' skills, progress and achievement
- good quality training
- very good support enabling trainees to progress
- good mentoring
- very rigorous assessment of trainees' work
- comprehensive and rigorous quality assurance mechanisms
- very close and effective partnership between university and college.

Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- late assessment of trainees' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- underdeveloped use of ILPs
- insufficient promotion of the provision to groups under-represented in the FE system
- underdeveloped use of university's resources.

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

Achievements of trainees

6. Trainees show clear evidence of their commitment to teaching and learning, and more importantly, to their students. They make themselves readily available to them to discuss areas of academic concern. All trainees show genuine care and respect and work hard, in and out of lessons, to raise their students' skills and promote their progress and achievement. This is especially the case for students at entry level, and level 1, and for those with diverse learning and social needs.

7. Trainees improve their teaching as a result of effective self-evaluation, although they find this a difficult experience. Consequently, some evaluations are over-descriptive and lack critical analysis. Feedback from lesson observations and mentors appropriately focuses on the impact of trainees' teaching on their own students learning and this helps them to develop their skills further. Irrespective of their starting points, trainees make good progress. They are well motivated to improve their practice and they increase their understanding of further education by engaging in relevant staff development. Trainees produce written work of a high standard. Their attendance is good and they are punctual and professional.

8. All trainees are well qualified in their subject specialism and have developed the pedagogical skills to ensure they teach effectively. As the course progresses and trainees become less concerned about generic teaching and learning practice, they become much more proficient in the specific skills needed to teach their specialist area.

9. Trainees plan well for their lessons and place the needs of the learner at the heart of their planning. They agree clear learning outcomes and check that they have been achieved at the end of the lesson. Trainees have high expectations of their students and most provide increasingly challenging activities for those who are capable of achieving more. Lesson plans and schemes of work place an appropriate emphasis on equal opportunities.

10. Trainees use a wide and varied range of teaching strategies and resources to aid learning. Many use information and learning technology (ILT) appropriately to help their students understand new topics and gain new skills, although ICT resources are not always reliable in the centres. In one lesson, a trainee encouraged students very successfully to act as teachers and use ILT to demonstrate new skills to their peers. Trainees integrate literacy and numeracy effectively into their lessons. They adapt their teaching well to meet the individual needs of different groups of students at varying levels of ability.

11. Trainees take good account of health and safety and equal opportunities issues. They manage their lessons confidently and re-arrange seating and activities well to enable students to be involved. Relationships between trainees and students are very good. Occasionally, trainees teach at an inappropriate pace which causes students to be frustrated and distracted. Nevertheless, trainees are aware of this and take prompt remedial action to re-engage their students.

12. Trainees use a wide range of assessment techniques. They give full and constructive feedback to their students and most assess thoroughly that learning is taking place during lessons. They set homework which consolidates the skills learned during lessons. Few trainees undertake paired marking to ensure standardisation and consistency. Trainees report fully on their students' achievements and progress to other teachers, tutors and to parents, carers and guardians.

13. Trainees know about the support services available for their students and direct them appropriately. They also provide much support themselves, in and out of lessons and often in their own time. They provide very good information, advice and guidance to help their students overcome their difficulties, and to progress to other courses.

Quality of training

14. Both programmes meet the national qualification requirements and have been endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK). The Cert Ed is structured and planned well and has been modified, in response to quality assurance recommendations, to meet trainees' needs very effectively. Each programme integrates the minimum core aspects, of literacy, numeracy and ICT, well and links effectively with workplace experiences.

15. Trainers and mentors help trainees to develop their skills in teaching their specialist subject areas. Training sessions and assignments frequently include appropriate references to trainees' workplaces. Trainers make good use of trainees' experiences as a learning resource and to disseminate good practice.

16. Trainers implement each course appropriately and in line with requirements, but do so flexibly to respond to trainees' circumstances. They plan their lessons very well. Teaching is of a high standard. Trainers are adept at engaging trainees in informal and helpful tutorials at the start of lessons and in developing an ethos of trust and mutual support. Trainers use a wide variety of teaching activities, including ILT, very effectively to aid learning. Trainers are good role models.

17. Trainers understand their roles thoroughly and complement each others' skills very effectively. They work well as a small team and with the university link tutor to monitor the quality of the courses and to promote improvements. They use guest speakers very well to broaden trainees' experiences and to raise their awareness of current issues in the lifelong learning sector.

18. Teacher trainers interview prospective trainees very thoroughly. The college assesses trainees' skills in literacy, numeracy, language and ICT, but some of these assessments were deferred until late in the first term. Trainers have improved the initial assessment procedures for potential trainees for 2008/09. Trainees receive good support from the learning resource centre and skills for life staff.

19. Second year trainees have good opportunities to develop teaching expertise in their specialist areas by working closely with their mentors. They meet frequently to discuss skills development and actions for improvement. Trainees record the outcomes of these meetings well and they provide clear evidence of the good progress trainees make during the year. Mentors observe trainees teach and advise them well. Once they obtain teaching practice placements, first year trainees work effectively with specialist subject link staff.

20. The ILPs are useful to some trainees, but less so to others. They are insufficiently well completed to collate trainees' strengths and areas for attention to review progress and inform development points. Many ILPs contain mostly operational short-term targets which are reviewed or assessed infrequently. Nevertheless, trainees are aware from other feedback of what they need to do to improve and they take effective action to secure this. The final ILP is useful because it enables trainees to concentrate on their future careers and training needs. It contains a full analysis of their strengths and areas for development based on the outcomes of their courses.

21. Trainers frequently reinforce the need for trainees to evaluate their performance and progress. Trainees' skills of self-evaluation improve significantly throughout the course. The majority of them become more analytical and link areas for improvement with appropriate solutions.

22. Trainees are encouraged to use their own experiences and specialist subject areas in their assignment work. Most assessment criteria are sufficiently flexible to promote the inclusion of work-based knowledge and experiences. Assignment work is assessed very rigorously. Feedback is clear, detailed and supportive. Good assignments are referred because of slightly imperfect technical aspects and because teacher trainers expect high standards. In a few instances, assignment referencing was not always accurate and reflected insufficiently wide reading. Effective work has been undertaken with trainees to improve practice in both these areas.

23. The quality of feedback on the observation of teaching and learning is good. Assessments of teaching practice are comprehensive, with effective analysis of trainees' strengths and areas for improvement. Mentors observe trainees' lessons in their specialist areas and provide very useful feedback.

24. The moderation of the final awards is very thorough. A clear and detailed analysis leads to secure judgements which are accurate and consistent. Final assessments are very rigorous and comprehensive. Trainees are referred appropriately if they have not met the course requirements.

Management and quality assurance of provision

25. In-service trainees follow the same procedures as other new teachers at the college in terms of recruitment, selection, induction and staff development. Teacher

trainers interview prospective trainees very thoroughly in terms of their abilities and potential to succeed on the course. They determine candidates' qualifications and relevant experiences at interview and recruit with integrity.

26. Trainees receive thorough and supportive initial information, advice and guidance about the courses. They are fully informed of the demands of the training and the need to devote significant time to it outside their college attendance. Teacher trainers agree training needs and advise trainees how best to improve their skills.

27. The proportions of female trainees and trainees from a white British background are greater than those of other students at the college. Managers have not promoted the provision sufficiently to communities from which teachers in the FE system are under-represented.

28. Managers and trainers plan the programmes well, amend the sequence of unit delivery to meet particular needs and are very responsive to constructive proposals for further development. Nevertheless, the subject specialist link arrangement, although helpful to first year trainees, is less well organised and funded than the mentoring system supporting those in the second year.

29. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They work effectively as a small team, support each other well and benefit from their close liaison with the university. Frequent meetings and discussions ensure that all are closely involved with the programme and its development.

30. Trainers use learning resources and ILT very well to aid trainees' learning and progress. Trainees make good use of the increasing range of resources on the virtual learning environment. Nevertheless, both teacher trainers and trainees do not have access to a sufficiently broad range of resources to raise their awareness of current issues and trends in the sector. Insufficient use is made of the university's facilities. Trainees have read-only access to the learning resources and trainers do not participate in staff development opportunities at the university.

31. The partnership arrangements are good and well-established. College staff liaise closely with the university's link tutor at operational levels. Strategically, college and university staff are members of each others' committees. The co-operation between the university and the college is well-established and very effective. It improves the quality of the training and, consequently, the trainees' experiences. The course team is very effective in addressing issues raised by other staff, trainees and the external examiner and through the annual monitoring report, board of studies and course reviews.

32. Those with restricted mobility have good access to the training facilities at the college. The course team promotes equality of opportunity well and ensures compliance with best practice through monitoring the use of appropriate language and materials in training sessions. The learning and quality enhancement handbook

illustrates a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and is available in alternative formats to meet the requirements of trainees with different needs.

33. Moderation processes are effective and thorough in ensuring that assessments are accurate and consistent. Teacher trainers are very reflective and they question and challenge each other frequently to improve trainees' experiences. College staff self-assess the teacher-training provision very thoroughly and take prompt action to address areas of concern.

34. The university's link tutor liaises very well, through the college's director of teaching and learning, with the college tutors. The partnership has a shared ethos, mission and set of values. Trainees' success rates on the Cert Ed and precursor qualifications are high. The annual quality monitoring process covers the quality of trainees' experiences and the management processes fully. The training team takes good account of trainees' feedback. The annual external examiner's report covers the adequacy of academic standards and trainees' achievement very thoroughly.