University of Worcester

A further education teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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The inspection

1.   The inspection was carried out in accordance with the *Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education (FE) teachers* and the guidance in the *Handbook for the inspection of initial training of FE teachers*, both published in 2004. It was conducted in two phases by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. During the first phase which took place in October 2007, inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance. During the second phase, they concentrated on evaluating the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. The second phase of the inspection was completed in June 2008.

Background

2.   The University of Worcester works in partnership with four further education (FE) colleges to provide part-time initial teacher training courses for FE teachers and other trainers employed in the post-compulsory sector. The provision consists of the legacy Certificate in Education which, at the time of the inspection, was in its final year and the new part-time, two year course. There is currently no provision at post-graduate level. Both the legacy and new qualifications are endorsed by Standards Verification UK. The university takes overall responsibility for management of the partnership, quality assurance of the provision and course development. At the time of the inspection there were 124 trainees on the new programme and a further 89 completing the legacy course.

Effectiveness of provision

3.   The overall quality of provision is adequate (grade 3). The new course has many good features including the high profiling of the minimum core and the subject specialist elements in delivery and assessment. It provides a good basis for trainees to develop sound teaching skills and to progress onto other programmes offered by the university. Trainees demonstrate clear commitment to and understanding of the issues facing learners in the post-compulsory sector and are committed to providing them with opportunities for success. They make satisfactory or better progress and are able to use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. Trainees' skills in self-reflection are sometimes under-developed and they are not always confident in planning for and managing the needs of individual learners. The quality of training at the centres is good and trainees engage enthusiastically in training sessions. Resources for information and communications technology (ICT) are not yet sufficient to ensure the development of trainees' own ICT skills. Teacher trainers are informally supportive of their trainees and there is good support for those trainees with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there are insufficiently systematic arrangements for individual tutorials to promote the regular and effective monitoring of individual trainees' progress. Trainees in colleges obtain

effective support from their mentors in the context of their subject specialisms but this support is not always available in other education and training settings. There is good assessment of the trainees' practical teaching skills, although the assessment of written work shows some inaccuracies in grading. The feedback to trainees does not make enough reference to the grading criteria.

4.	The university demonstrates a strong commitment to the post-compulsory sector. The partnership, although relatively recent, is genuinely collaborative involving all its members in the planning, development and evaluation of the programmes and offering good professional development opportunities for college staff. The partnership response to identified weaknesses arising from inspection is systematic; although the positive impact of planned changes is not yet fully evident. Monitoring of some aspects of the provision is not yet sufficiently rigorous and there is some inconsistency in the way the programme is monitored in the different colleges. The strategy for improving the quality of mentoring arrangements is being implemented slowly. The arrangements for monitoring the standards of trainees' practical teaching have so far not covered a sufficiently large sample of trainers and mentors.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' strong commitment to the post-compulsory education and training sector and to raising their learners' achievement

- well designed new Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) programme

- good quality training on the taught programme which motivates trainees

- effective support from mentors in colleges for the development of trainees' specialist subject specialist skills

- good collaborative partnership which involves its members effectively in the planning, development and evaluation of the programmes

- prompt and effective attention to trainees' oral feedback and module evaluations leading to improvements in provision.

Areas for attention

The partnership should address the:

- under-developed skills of some trainees of self-reflection and of planning for and managing the learning of individuals

- insufficiently systematic arrangements for tutorials to ensure the regular and effective monitoring of individual trainees' progress against identified targets

- inconsistent application of the grading criteria in feedback on written assignments

- under-developed ICT resources to support trainees' teaching skills including their specialist subject development and to enable them to support their learners

- slow implementation of the strategy for improving the quality of mentoring arrangements

- insufficient monitoring of the standards of trainees' practical teaching across the consortium.

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

Achievements of trainees

5.　　Trainees demonstrate clear understanding of the issues facing learners in post-compulsory education and training. They have a strong belief in the potential of education to provide learners with the opportunity of developing their self-esteem and succeeding in their chosen field. This is underpinned by good inclusive practice. They give freely of their time to support their learners. Over the course of the programme many trainees have developed their reflective practice well and this has led to clear improvements in their workplace performance. However, in some instances, particularly in the first year, the development of these skills is less successfully achieved, and their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) do not always reflect this in targets set and actions planned.

6.　　Trainees use the course effectively to develop their own professional knowledge and understanding, often engaging simultaneously in additional professional development activity. Their experience is further extended by their wider college roles which enable them to engage with different functions and link up with various support services. Trainees are well qualified to deliver their specialist subject and some of them have good professional and commercial experience which enhances their teaching.

7.　　Trainees are able to draw on a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to ensure that learners engage enthusiastically with their learning. There is some good evidence of creativity in the devising of tasks and resources such as imaginative warm-up activities and quizzes.

8.   Trainees make satisfactory use of ICT. The more skilled trainees make good use of their college virtual learning environments, in one instance to help learners research a mobile phone project for business studies and, in a performing arts lesson, using MP3 technology to link a videoed storyboard with music. However, not all trainees are competent in this field and are unable to demonstrate appropriate ICT skills such as uploading materials onto a virtual learning environment (VLE) or to prepare handouts. In addition, some trainees have limited access to ICT and thus limited opportunities for developing their own and their learners' skills.

9.   Trainees' plan their lessons to a satisfactory standard. The better trainees are able to provide detailed and well devised lesson plans and schemes of work with clearly articulated aims and learning outcomes. They give due attention to opportunities for developing their learners' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. For others, planning is less effective. There are insufficiently clear indications of learning to be achieved and the trainees' understanding of ways in which they might plan to meet individual learners' needs is underdeveloped.

10.   Trainees incorporate literacy, numeracy and ICT effectively into their own teaching practice. They are able to demonstrate through their planning that they understand the importance of embedding aspects of literacy, numeracy and ICT into their lessons to enable their learners to achieve their potential.

11.   Trainees' knowledge and understanding of the principles of assessment are satisfactory. They are developing their understanding of assessment for learning. Although they gain experience of devising and marking assignments they do not always have sufficient opportunity to engage in moderation activities or to take responsibility for managing learners' ILPs, even under supervision. Their marking of written work is generally thorough, accurate and constructive although sometimes there are limited or no annotations on learners' work.

12.   Trainees show good basic knowledge and understanding of the range of needs of their learners and the systems and procedures designed to support these and enable them to progress to employment or further study. Where trainees have good recent workplace experience they advise learners effectively on issues relating to portfolio development and 'real work experience'.

Quality of training

13.   The new DTLLS course is well designed. It has been endorsed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK) and incorporates some good features including the high profiling of the importance of trainees' knowledge and skills of language, literacy and numeracy and their application of these in the workplace. Similarly, good attention is given to subject specialist development in delivery and assessment. Schemes of work for the courses show clear opportunities for ensuring that links between theory and practice are made explicit. The requirement for trainees to find additional experience of teaching at other levels and/or contexts is embedded into the course

and trainees have been successful in obtaining opportunities to teach at more than one level. Many of them, with the help of their teacher trainers and mentors, have set up peer observations to enable them to gain some experience of different contexts for teaching.

14.   The quality of training is good. Trainers inspire and challenge their trainees and model good practice. Trainees respond to their lessons enthusiastically and engage productively with the content. Lessons incorporate a good range of teaching and learning strategies and a wide range of resources. Lively, stimulating and challenging sessions include the effective use of regular warm-up and 'energising' activities such as songs and quizzes to help engage trainees quickly, introduce humour and encourage interaction.

15.   The development of trainees' ability to reflect on and evaluate their teaching experiences is satisfactory. Trainers draw trainees' attention to the theory underpinning such experiences effectively and this promotes effective reflection. However, in some trainees this ability is less well developed and has not always been made clear as an area for development in the trainees' ILPs.

16.   The development of trainees' ICT skills for use in teaching and learning is adequate. For some trainees' the development of these skills has been hampered by the late installation of interactive whiteboards in training classrooms. The impact of this was evident in some of the observations made of their teaching. The partnership has been slow to develop a fully effective partnership-wide intranet to support the use of subject specific groups and other resources. Trainees have good access to the university's library database as well as to those of their own colleges.

17.   Support for trainees is satisfactory. There is an effective process of initial assessment. Trainees undergo diagnostic testing for literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The results of these are used to identify areas for development and relevant support for these. As a consequence, the majority of trainees needing to acquire literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2 are successful within the first year. However, the development of trainees' ICT skills is not explicitly addressed in the way that literacy and numeracy are. Other learning needs are well supported and the university is able to offer useful additional support for dyslexia through a software package. There is also good support across the partnership for trainees with disabilities.

18.   The monitoring of trainees' progress by means of individual tutorials is insufficiently robust. Trainees have an entitlement to four tutorials during the year. However, in some instances they do not take up this offer and as a result, there is insufficient systematic support for and monitoring of progress against the targets set in trainees' ILPs. The targets set are themselves often vaguely written.

19.   In colleges, the support for the development of subject specialist knowledge and skills by trainees' mentors is good. Observation feedback and mentoring records show clear recommendations in terms of the development of subject pedagogy.

Trainees from other contexts do not always have the same support from their mentors, some of whom have not been able to access the training on offer.

20.   Assessment practice is inconsistent. Trainees are issued with a module pack giving full details of assignments and trainers give good support when issuing assignments. Written feedback on assignments is often constructive and detailed with clear actions for improvement. However, there is frequently no reference to the assessment criteria in summative feedback. Comments do not always make it clear how far the learning outcomes for the assignments have been met. On most assignments there is clear evidence of annotations on the work although on some is restricted to the occasional word. Feedback on observed teaching sessions is good with detailed comments and clear identification of actions that will result in improvements. Summative assessments revealed that in some cases assessors had been overly generous, particularly at the higher end of the A - D scale.

Management and quality assurance of provision

21.   Partnership working is effective. The university sees its relationships with its partner colleges as key to its own vision of itself as a university serving vocational education and training. There is productive collaboration between the various members with good communication, both formal and informal. Partner college teacher trainers are fully encouraged to participate in the development and adaptation of programmes. There are regular Partnership Advisory Group meetings of the university and the partner colleges and also cross-institutional meetings between the colleges, often held at the university, for the purpose of moderation and sharing practice.

22.   The university has managed the course effectively over the past three years while developing the new Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills qualification and also developing its continuing professional development portfolio is aimed at staff in partner colleges. The roles and responsibilities of all involved in the partnership are clear. The Partnership Advisory Group includes the management team, the course leaders from the colleges, and link tutors from the university. The role of the latter has been redefined this year to include a greater responsibility for quality assurance. Since the initial inspection visit link tutors' role has been further developed. In addition to paying visits to colleges to support and observe teacher trainers and to talk to students, link tutors have also become involved in delivering the course and carrying out focus group activities with trainees.

23.   Recruitment and selection procedures are good. As well as the assessment of literacy, numeracy and ICT needs, any other needs relating to learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly and effectively dealt with. The on-line registration process works effectively. The contractual requirements relating to teacher training are made clear to all college staff and there is clear liaison between the teacher training staff and the Human Resources and staff development functions in the partner colleges. The partnership has made some useful progress in exploring the

equality and diversity data to establish local trends; however, as yet, there is no clear strategy to address the issue of the recruitment of under-represented groups.

24.   Resources to support the training are satisfactory. Teacher trainers are generally well qualified and regularly engage in professional development activity much of which is organised by the university. The development of the partnership VLE has been slow and a new website currently has limited resources. The university was successful in its bid to become a Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (WMCETT) in partnership with the University of Warwick. The Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training has been engaged in completing training needs analyses for teacher trainers and developing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) modules to meet these. As yet the impact of this relationship is not clear.

25.   Systems and procedures for monitoring the quality of the provision are satisfactory. The annual monitoring of the quality of the course is generally effective at identifying areas for action for example the need for appointment times for tutorials, the monitoring and evaluation of mentor activity, etc. However actions have not always followed in a sufficiently timely manner. There is some inconsistency among partner colleges in the quality of the review process: better practice demonstrates comprehensiveness and accuracy but some fails to identify key issues. There is limited reference to equal opportunities in the university's annual monitoring review with limited data monitoring and subsequently no action planning. Although the university has responded systematically to weaknesses identified through inspection, in some areas progress has not been as effective as it might have been with potential impact not discernable at this stage.

26.   There are comprehensive procedures in place for monitoring the assessment process. However, these are not always applied effectively and consequently have not identified the inconsistencies in the grading of some summative assignments, or the lack of references to grading criteria in the feedback on written assignments. Detailed records of moderation meetings are kept with key themes identified. These are subsequently translated into professional development activities for the team. The external examiner gives detailed feedback on assessment practice and this has resulted in changes to procedures which have led to improvements.

27.   The monitoring of the standards of trainees' practical teaching is insufficiently rigorous. The university has carried out some observations of trainers at the colleges but the procedure agreed for trainers in colleges to extend this to the monitoring of mentors' observation practice has not been fully implemented and the sample of both trainers and mentors observed during the first year of the new course is very small.

28.   End of module and course evaluations are completed by all trainees and the results of these are discussed at the PAG. There are also good opportunities for trainees to feedback orally to link tutors during the year. Actions requested are addressed very promptly. For example, concerns voiced by them at an early stage in the year about insufficient guidance on preparing assignments were promptly and effectively dealt with.

29.   The strategy for monitoring the quality of mentoring arrangements is being implemented slowly. The university undertook a useful analysis of the training needs of mentors and three training sessions were delivered which were well evaluated. Not all mentors were able to attend the sessions and there were no alternative methods for ensuring that all mentors receive some basic training about their role and responsibilities. This was particularly true where mentors were not members of the colleges' staff. Evidence of mentoring practice from records seen and trainees interviewed is on the whole positive but the strategy to ensure a more robust mentoring process is underdeveloped.

Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the HEI Partnership at the time of the inspection:

Bournville College
Halesowen College
Josiah Mason College (Sutton College)
Kidderminster College