

Chiltern Training Group SCITT

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

Challney High School for Boys and Community College
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Inspection dates

30 March – 3 April 2009

Lead inspector

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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 Chiltern Training Group School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) Consortium offers training leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) and the award of a professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE) in art and design, business studies, design and technology, English, geography, information and communication technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education and science. With the exception of business studies, where training covers the 14-19 age range, courses are designed to prepare trainees to teach the 11-16 age range. The Consortium is an accredited institution of the University of Bedfordshire which validates all the courses and the PGCE award. At the time of the inspection there were 46 trainees.

4. The Chiltern Training Group, which is the longest running provider of school-centred initial teacher training in the country, was formed in 1993 by Challney High School for Boys and Community College. It is a consortium of sixteen Luton and Bedfordshire High and Upper schools and the Luton Sixth Form College. A further five schools, including three middle schools, contribute to the training as associates. The partnership maintains very close links with Luton Local Authority where most of the partnership schools are located. The central team is based at Challney High School for Boys which is a designated training school.

Provision in the secondary phase

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:

- the breadth of experience trainees gain from their placements in highly committed and effective partnership schools
- the excellent pastoral care provided for individual trainees and the prompt response to any problems that emerge
- the exceptionally strong cohesion between the different elements of the training
- the rigorous assessment and exemplary tracking of trainees' progress
- the thorough evaluation, readiness to embrace change and exceptionally clear vision of the future of the partnership which have resulted in a steady improvement in trainee outcomes since the last inspection
- the very strong sense of purpose that exists within the partnership and its significant contribution to the recruitment, retention and development of the teaching workforce within the Luton area.

Recommendations

6. In order to further improve the high quality of training across the partnership the provider should:

- consider how to develop the skills of all mentors so that they match those of the best
- increase further the intellectual challenge of the training by ensuring that all trainees are fully aware of the breadth of literature relevant to the teaching of their subject.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

7. Since its formation 16 years ago, the Chiltern Training Group has steadily improved the quality of its provision and it is now an outstandingly effective provider of teacher education. Given their ability and starting points all groups of trainees make very rapid progress. Inspectors agree with the partnership's assessment that the overall attainment of trainees is good, with just over three-quarters of the trainees being judged to be at least good and a third outstanding. Over the last three years there has been a steady improvement in the proportion of trainees achieving the Standards at the highest levels. The opportunity to train in outstanding and good schools provides an excellent grounding for trainees' future careers in teaching. One ex-trainee commented, 'the whole course not only enables you to meet the Standards, it teaches you to lead, manage and co-operate'.

8. The rigorous selection process results in the recruitment of trainees who have exceptionally strong personal qualities and the intellectual capacity to meet the demands of teaching. Trainees show a very clear commitment to work in schools with a diverse and often challenging student population and, because of this and their relevant subject expertise, they are well matched to the needs of local schools. The training is particularly attractive to trainees who live locally and who have attended local universities. Nearly half the trainees come from a minority ethnic background, a figure that is significantly above the national average. The partnership usually fills all training places although, on occasions, late withdrawals or requests for deferral occur. Over the last three years, very few trainees have failed to successfully complete the training and the majority move into teaching posts in local schools. A major factor in the successful completion rate is the outstanding support and care provided for individual trainees. At all levels, managers and trainers give high priority to trainees' personal well-being.

9. The selection process enables the partnership to identify trainees' individual needs at a very early stage and this information is used very effectively to formulate personalised training plans and to ensure that trainees make a successful start to classroom teaching. At all stages, the training is very well organised and structured. The clarity and accessibility of the training materials, highly efficient course administration and excellent communications ensure that the trainees are very well informed and prepared for their training. The mature and professional manner in which they quickly adjust to the demands of the training programme is impressive.

10. The highest attaining trainees demonstrate the ability to plan their lessons in considerable detail because of the consistent focus throughout their training on the essential aspects of a good lesson. They plan varied activities in response to students' differing needs and abilities and have the confidence and ability to adapt their teaching as lessons progress. These trainees invariably possess a very secure knowledge of their subject and often draw directly upon their own experience of work outside education. Their rapid progress is closely linked to the very high quality of feedback they receive following lesson observations from school-based and central trainers. This not only identifies the successful features of the lesson but also encourages the trainees to reflect in detail on their teaching and its impact on

students' learning. The impressive level of personal and professional reflection evident amongst the highest attaining trainees is the outcome of the very skilful mentoring they experience and also the regular use of the personal journal which is an integral part of the training.

11. All trainees rise to the high expectations of central and school-based trainers and are prepared to take risks to try out different ideas. They show an excellent understanding of the importance of meeting the needs of students within their classes and appreciate the opportunity to face the challenges of working in schools in multicultural and urban settings. Aided by the well-structured and helpful documentation, trainees are able to plan lessons, often based on the three-part format, which take account of students' prior attainment. Trainees' effective use of electronic learning resources enhances their teaching. The consistency, regularity and continuity of target setting contributes significantly to trainees' rapid progress and, as with lesson planning and evaluation, target setting is supported by high quality documentation. All trainees regularly evaluate the impact of their teaching on students' attainment and progress.

12. The exceptionally strong coherence between the separate elements of the training and its high quality contribute to trainees' outstanding progress and their enjoyment and motivation. Central sessions model good teaching practice; they are planned meticulously in response to individual needs and use engaging activities, reflecting a variety of learning styles and approaches. Sessions are frequently led by experienced practitioners from partnership schools and there are also contributions from those at the leading edge of local and national developments. Subject training is very carefully planned to reflect the latest national guidance and ensures that all trainees know how to teach their subject. Nonetheless, a small minority of trainees are not sufficiently aware of the breadth of literature which could helpfully inform their teaching practice.

13. Weekly meetings between mentors, professional tutors and trainees, regular observation of trainees' teaching and very close attention to the setting and tracking of targets are highly consistent features of the school-based training.. Trainees benefit considerably from their placements in a diverse range of settings. The different contexts and cultures of the schools in which they undertake their two main placements significantly enhance their professional knowledge and understanding. In addition, the series of visits to primary schools provides them with more insight into primary education than is normally found on secondary training courses.

14. The training is very well resourced. Human and physical resources are deployed very effectively and the very best use is made of all available time. The partnership capitalises upon the expertise and resources within the training school to enhance its provision and, where necessary, additional support is provided promptly to support trainees. The exemplary tracking of trainees' achievement and progress is a key contributory factor to their outstanding progress. The relatively new web-based system to record evidence of trainees' achievement and track their progress models best practice in assessment and ensures that trainees know precisely how well they are doing and the next steps they need to take. It encourages trainees to set their own targets, to identify their actions for improvement and, most significantly, to take

responsibility for their own development. It also ensures that trainers maintain a very detailed overview of each trainee's progress and are able to intervene promptly if needed. The robust assessment and moderation systems ensure the accuracy of the assessments made of trainees' attainment.

15. Regular well-attended staff meetings of school-based and central trainers are used very productively for training and networking, and also to promote the high expectations, clarity of roles and consistency of practice which pervades the partnership. Although always effective, the partnership is aware that not all mentors demonstrate the skills of the very best.

16. The promotion of equality and diversity is exemplary. In addition to meeting all statutory requirements, the partnership closely monitors the outcomes and impact of its equalities policies. As a result, trainees feel valued, well supported and safe, and trust trainers to handle their concerns quickly and sensitively. Managers and trainers are particularly knowledgeable about trainees' cultural needs and this contributes to the high retention and success rates of those following the course.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 1

17. The Chiltern Training Group has the capacity to achieve very high quality outcomes for trainees and has a demonstrable record of improvement since its last inspection. This improvement owes much to the very strong sense of purpose and the collegiality that exists within the partnership. Schools and the local authority value the significant contribution the Chiltern Training Group makes to the recruitment, retention and development of the teaching workforce within the Luton area and are highly committed to it. They share its ambition to improve the quality of education for young people in the area and their willingness to contribute actively to its work is fundamental to its outstanding effectiveness.

18. Since its inception, the partnership has been guided by a very strong belief in the power of high quality teacher training to drive up standards of teaching and learning in participating schools. Currently, nearly half the teachers in the lead school and nearly one in five of all those teaching in Luton schools were trained by the partnership. During the inspection, staff in the schools and the local authority spoke of the responsiveness of the partnership to local needs and, in particular, its significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of local schools. They also cited numerous spin-offs to the partnership's work. For instance, partnership meetings, while essentially designed to train mentors, also help foster subject networks within the local area. In addition, as a reflection of their drive and capability, many former trainees move quickly into leadership and management roles within Luton schools.

19. The partnership has an accurate and detailed knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Its self evaluation document provides a very clear picture of the quality of provision, evidence of thorough review and the identification of pertinent priorities

for improvement. To inform its self-evaluation, the partnership draws upon an extensive range of evidence including internal and external evaluations, previous inspection reports and the views of current and past trainees. Although the partnership evaluates its work very thoroughly, individual schools do not always analyse the effectiveness of their own initial teacher education provision with the same rigour.

20. In addition to formal processes for gathering users' views, the strength of relationships within the partnership also facilitates informal communications and evidence gathering. These processes feed into detailed and focused improvement planning.

21. There are numerous examples of developments to raise the quality of provision and improve outcomes as a result of this process. These include the introduction of the web-based tracking system, the revised training documentation, the reorganisation of the senior leadership group, and the creation of new trainee welfare tutor posts to provide an added layer of support for trainees. Some aspects of provision identified as weaker in previous inspections, including trainees' ability to assess their students and plan for their differing needs, have now become strengths. Senior leaders analyse data very skilfully and, by doing so, are able to link cause and effect. For example, the links between the outcomes of previous cohorts of trainees and information gathered during the selection process have been analysed very carefully in order to identify the personal attributes and qualifications that are most likely to predict future success.

22. Leadership at all levels is very responsive to change and the training programme is regularly modified and improved in the light of national and local needs. The involvement of many of the senior leaders and trainers in educational initiatives ensures that the training is fully up-to-date. For example, following her year-long secondment to the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the headteacher of one of the partnership schools has led training on the 14-19 diplomas. In addition, the context of the training, based in an outstanding training school, ensures that the leadership and management are fully conversant with, and often at the forefront of, national educational developments and initiatives.

23. There is an exceptionally clear vision of the future of the partnership which drives its planning. Succession planning at all levels is given a great deal of attention. For instance, the appointment of the majority of trainees to posts in local schools enables the partnership to track the continuing professional development of past trainees and to use their experiences to enhance its provision. A high proportion of former trainees quickly become effective mentors. Similarly, in advance of the retirement of the headteacher of the lead school, there has been very bold and creative thinking to plan for the leadership of the partnership with the prime purpose of ensuring its stability and the continued improvement in the outcomes for trainees. The leadership structure ensures that all stakeholders, including the trainees, contribute to the direction and development of the partnership. Leaders are justifiably proud of their consistent record of improvement and share an overwhelming desire to improve further.

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

		Secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	1
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	1
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	1

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
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?		1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1

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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