

# Nottingham Trent University

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A primary initial teacher training  
short inspection report  
2008/09

Managing inspector  
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Reference no. 080190

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## Introduction

Nottingham Trent University works in partnership with approximately three hundred schools to provide primary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers a four-year BA (Hons) course which prepares trainees to teach pupils in either the primary or early years age ranges, a one-year Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE NQF level 6) and a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE NQF level 7) which prepares trainees to teach in the primary age range. At the time of the inspection there were 517 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 short 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

Management and quality assurance: Grade: 3

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework 2008 -11.

## Strengths

- The content and structure of the Early Years training programme
- The opportunity to work with pupils outside the normal school context
- The recruitment and retention of well qualified trainees
- The quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

## Points for action

- Improving the effectiveness of the monitoring of school-based training to ensure quality and consistency of trainees' school placements
- Developing more sharply focused subject specific assessment of trainees' progress when observing lessons, giving feedback and setting targets
- Collecting and analysing data on the trainees' developing skills in teaching the core subjects.

## Points for consideration

- Improving the attendance of mentors and link tutors at university-based training sessions
- Undertaking further work to secure the assessment of trainees at the higher grade boundaries.

## The quality of training

1. Training in English and mathematics continues to be well structured and delivered. It is firmly based on the content of the National Curriculum, the National Strategies, the Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the simple view of reading. The training programmes soundly prepare trainees to teach literacy and numeracy effectively and to teach in primary schools. There is a recognised need, however, to ensure that trainees make greater progress towards meeting the Standards at the higher levels. Training to teach in early years settings is a strength.
2. From a low base last year, the quality of science training has improved and is now satisfactory. This improvement has been driven by keener leadership, a precisely framed subject action plan, and a strengthening of the science training team. The result is clearer direction for the work of the trainers and a shared understanding of primary science. Cohesion of the science training, which was a significant weakness last year, has been gained through the drafting of a comprehensive training plan encompassing taught sessions, subject audits, assignments, and school based tasks. Investigative science is rightly given a prominent place and this contributes to the improved structure and cohesion. The implementing of the revised training plan is at an early stage and, while there are indications of success, the impact of the planning on the progress of the trainees, particularly on their developing teaching skills, has yet to be realised fully.
3. The professional studies programmes continue to provide good links across the central training with the study of aspects such as the assessment of children's learning, inclusion, differentiated teaching, and the learning and teaching of English as an additional language. Providing opportunities for working with children outside the school setting remains a strength of the training.
4. The partnership is gaining more detailed information about the trainees' coverage of the core subjects in their teaching and about their developing skills. However, the collection and analysis of data on trainees' performance and achieving more consistency in the quality of school-based training remain key objectives. Although the partnership provides clear direction and guidance to school mentors in ensuring trainees' entitlement to high quality support during school placements, including the development of their core subject knowledge, the picture in schools remains too variable. Generic feedback from lesson observations is full, practical and constructive. Subject specific assessments and feedback are increasing in frequency but these aspects are not yet consistently applied across schools or subjects.
5. Systems for monitoring the trainees' progress and attainments are increasingly successful in securing improvement. Subject leaders and team leaders are implementing assessment procedures more rigorously. The recently introduced progress tracker has enabled trainees to assess their training experiences and learning, and to identify the stages and next steps.

## Management and quality assurance

6. The management and quality assurance are satisfactory and are compliant with the Secretary of State's Requirements for initial teacher training. There have been changes of staffing, management structure and programme planning since the previous inspection and these are having a positive effect on the direction, cohesion, and understanding of staff. In turn, they are contributing to improvements in training.

7. The partnership's self evaluation document (2007-08), completed thoroughly, provides an accurate, incisive and comprehensive picture of its position and progress. A range of data on programme evaluations was collated and analysed well, and strengths and weaknesses were clearly identified. The quality of the evaluation and the planning fully indicates the partnership's capacity to build rapidly on the sound foundations established over the last year.

8. The partnership continues to be successful in recruiting well qualified and motivated trainees. Retention rates are good and have improved significantly over a three-year period. Recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups continues to be good and is above the sector average. The provider is starting to make more consistent and effective use of information gained at selection to inform training.

9. The university has responded well to the issues identified for improvement in the inspection of 2008. Each point for action was addressed in the partnership's recovery plan with clear specification of intended outcomes, appropriate actions, timescales and responsibilities, and rigorous review arrangements. Strategic objectives are precisely framed. The evaluation of actions provides a clear record of progress, completion and developments. The university rightly focused urgently on short term actions in response to the issues identified in the report. It is now including wider issues for longer term development in the recently drafted development plan. This is an appropriate and helpful move, and directed specifically to improving trainees' attainments.

10. The revised management structure has resulted in clearer lines of direction and accountability being established and a greater understanding of these by all partners in the training. The school of education's management team plays a significant role in driving improvement. Progress on the recovery plan features continually on the agenda and meeting notes indicate that considerable time and thought have been given to implementing the prescribed actions in pursuit of the intended outcomes. The primary partnership management group is playing an increasingly significant role in providing strategic direction, in widening participation of partners in management and in holding the primary team's work to account.

11. Rigorous monitoring of the central training is being developed. Reviewing, developing and maintaining capacity of the primary ITE staff is undertaken through peer observations, the university's appraisal system and the trainees' evaluations. These procedures are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of the

training. This is evident, for example, in the developing effectiveness of the provision in science to bring it into line with other core subjects. Trainees are now much more positive about the cohesion of the course and the quality of the science training, and their views are borne out in the inspection evidence and judgements. The university is responsive to trainees' evaluations and increasingly to views expressed by partnership schools. Concerns are quickly followed up, investigated and addressed.

12. Improved procedures for monitoring and assuring the quality and consistency of school-based training are in place but they are not yet fully effective in gaining consistency across subjects, programmes and cohorts. The university has set out clear expectations of the features of good school-based training in the partnership handbook, in mentoring documentation and in mentor training sessions. The capacity of schools to train is reviewed on their entry into partnership and the maintenance of that quality is continually monitored thorough university evaluations and the scrutiny of inspection reports. Information on the quality of placements is shared across the primary team and the school of education. Where there are concerns or doubts about the support given in individual placements, additional support or alternative school visits are arranged.

13. Link tutors and school mentors play key roles in assuring the quality of school based training. Much consideration and time have been given to enhancing and supporting their work. Attendance of mentors and link tutors at the university's training events is improving but there is room for further improvement. Both mentors and link tutors have had training on the assessment and tracking of the progress of trainees using the Standards for qualified teacher status and giving sharper focus to subject specific evaluations and feedback. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the observations, feedback and reports but it is not consistently applied across subjects by either link tutors or mentors. Monitoring of school based training is improving but this has not yet fully impacted on the intended improvement in the trainees' progress and attainments.

14. Moderation of the assessments of the trainees' progress is carried out in school by the mentor and the link tutor at mid and end-of-placement reviews, and across the partnership at moderation meetings attended by link tutors. Concerns about the progress of individual trainees are identified and addressed early. The university is secure in its assessment at the pass/fail boundary but recognises further work needs to undertaken on the higher grade boundaries.