

# The Cambridge Partnership

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Inspection dates	8 – 12 June 2009
Lead inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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## Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by one of 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. Established in 1998 as a collaborative venture between the Cambridge University Faculty of Education and 3 local authorities: Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk, the partnership is now managed independently of the founding partners. In 2008 a new management structure was created with new premises and a new director. The partnership is based at Sawtry Community College, a training school in Cambridgeshire and comprises of representatives of a number of secondary schools across the 3 local authorities.

4. The course offers routes to qualified status through employment-based initial teacher education. The provider attracts a large number of applicants. This year 71 secondary trainees in both shortage and non-shortage subjects were accepted onto the course. Around two-thirds of trainees are fully funded and the remainder are employed by partnership schools, supported by a training grant. There are currently no primary trainees.

## Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

### Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
  - the rigorous selection processes that result in the recruitment of dedicated and well-qualified trainees who make a significant contribution to meeting local needs
  - the strong personal support the trainees receive from the stable and highly committed group of partnership schools
  - the well-developed skills of the trainees in planning suitable lessons and managing the learning within the classroom.

### Required actions

6. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership must:
  - strengthen the roles and responsibilities of managers at all levels in quality assuring the work of the partnership to improve consistency
  - refine the systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of mentors in schools to ensure their judgements are accurate and the quality of the feedback they provide is of an equally high standard.

### Recommendations

7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
  - create stronger links between the audits of the trainees' subject knowledge and their individual training plans to increase personalisation of the programme and strengthen subject knowledge development
  - review all documentation, so that it is clear, concise and enables the trainees and their mentors to monitor their progress more effectively.

### Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

8. Trainees' attainment by the end of the programme is satisfactory. The provider has begun to track trainees' progress but the systems for doing this are new. Some aspects of internal moderation are under-developed. Inspectors found that assessment grades were sometimes over generous. Despite this, there is clear evidence that all the current trainees are making at least satisfactory progress. The stable group of partnership schools provide good training environments. Mentors provide trainees with strong personal support. As a result, the trainees develop good

skills for planning suitable activities in their lessons, for managing their classrooms and they form positive working relationships with their students and other adults.

9. Rigorous selection processes ensure that the provider recruits appropriately qualified trainees who go on to make a significant contribution to meeting local needs. The majority successfully complete the course, remain in local schools and many progress quickly to promoted posts. The provider is willing to support weaker recruits where there are specific shortages, for example in subjects such as mathematics. The high number of applicants ensures the provider recruits in excess of the target number, except in the case of minority ethnic trainees. By actively seeking applications from under-represented groups the provider is starting to improve the numbers of these trainees recruited to courses. Detailed training plans are drawn up before the course commences. These are central to the training but there is some variability in the quality of the pre-course tasks set for trainees. There is scope for paying greater attention to the progress of the strongest trainees, many of whom have considerable prior experience as teaching assistants or having previously worked in further education.

10. The individual components of the course are at least satisfactory and some are good. The professional studies programme is well received by trainees who can indicate how it has effectively supported their teaching. Subject sessions make very good use of appropriate facilities and expertise in partner schools. They are designed to complement the professional studies sessions. The opportunity to meet in subject groups increases personal support for trainees and builds trainee networks many of which continue long after the course has finished. In addition, there are conferences on a range of topics such as voice production. Attendance at all these events is very good. Written assignments and presentations are well chosen, but there is scope for greater personalisation of the process by relating the themes more closely to prior and current experience. Assignment feedback is variable in quality and often acknowledges stronger features without giving advice on how to improve further. An encouraging number of trainees have the opportunity to have this work assessed and accredited towards a master's level qualification.

11. Mentors provide strong personal support and set targets regularly, but these often focus on tasks rather than on the trainee's learning. Not all trainees receive their full entitlement to mentor sessions. The audits of subject knowledge for teaching and information and communication technology (ICT) skills do not feed routinely into the individual training plans. Although the training is flexible in order to meet specific individual needs, in general these plans are not used consistently or adapted sufficiently as the course progresses. Tracking documents do not clearly indicate to trainees what they need to do next. The function of these documents is not universally understood, with the result that trainees are not always aware of those standards where they are most successful and those needing greater attention. Assessment is satisfactory overall but there is some inconsistency in mentors' grading of trainees on their block school experience. Joint observations with course managers and subject tutors take place, but there is a need to ensure a consistent understanding amongst all trainers of what constitutes good or outstanding teaching. End of placement reports are of a high quality and ensure good communication between placement schools.

12. Additional resources are provided to meet individual needs or subject requirements, for example laptops have been provided for ICT trainees and text books have been provided for all. Additional support is generously put in place when trainees are experiencing difficulties. The provider has increased allocations to subject areas to ensure there is a subject specialist in every subject offered. There is a wide mix of expertise in the partnership schools which includes some training schools. The development of the base at Sawtry and the generosity of partnership schools in allowing the use of their premises for training events have enabled the partnership to continue to function effectively during a time of considerable change and upheaval.

13. The commitment and involvement of all partners is high. The pattern of placements is effective in giving the trainees a confident start in their host school, which forms their second and longer experience. Nevertheless, there is too much similarity between placements for a few trainees. The timing of the primary experience is not ideal for self-funded trainees and the expectations for following up the experience vary across subjects. Professional tutors take part in quality assurance activities to a variable degree. There are limited opportunities for professional tutors to meet and share good practice and training sessions for both professional tutors and mentors are not well attended. The partnership agreement is not sufficiently direct about the expectations of all those involved in the training.

14. All requirements are met with regard to equality opportunities policies and their monitoring. Not all trainees get an experience of cultural diversity because of the context of the partnership schools. However, there are training sessions to help trainees understand the needs of different groups of pupils and many have the opportunity to observe teaching in schools with a higher than average mix of minority ethnic pupils. Personal and individual support is a strength. Communication is good and electronic communications have further improved this aspect. Strong relationships ensure trainees are confident about disclosing any incidents or problems. Several case studies give evidence of sensitive support for a number of trainees with disabilities. Issues deriving from the wide geographical nature of the partnership are addressed satisfactorily and some imaginative approaches to making events accessible to all have been established.

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

15. The considerable changes to the leadership of the partnership have been undertaken with determination by all partners to secure the quality of provision under the new arrangements. Schools have given generously of their time and resources because they value the contribution the partnership makes to education in the area. The new management structures are supporting the continuing improvement of the courses on offer and there are plans in place to expand places next year and to reintroduce a primary programme in due course. The training runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and some modest improvements in provision and outcomes are evident. The new partnership has demonstrated satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

16. The managers of the partnership have accurately identified strengths and areas for development and some aspects of the programme have been successfully adjusted in the light of the self-evaluation. For example, the selection process has been refined this year to improve the rigour of the procedures and to enable the provider to set more accurate starting points from which to measure progress. The systems for gathering information take into account the views of all partners and external moderators, but are new and yet to become embedded. As a result, the quality assurance mechanisms have yet to address the inconsistencies in the quality of provision across the partnership. The introduction this year of a post with the sole purpose of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the programme has significantly strengthened the capacity of the partnership in this area of its work. The high number of trainees who remain in local schools once they have gained qualified teacher status enables the provider to follow their career paths and use this information to confirm the effectiveness of the training. The final assessment process is rigorous.

17. The partnership benefits from links with external networks; for example through an informal group made up of representatives from higher education. Links with the local authorities served by the partnership have been maintained and their expertise is used effectively to support training sessions. The provider ensures that new initiatives are systematically built into the training programme so that trainees develop a secure understanding of current educational issues. The newly established website is well-used by trainees and continues to be developed. This has been further enhanced this year to allow a pilot to be run on the use of electronic portfolios of evidence that trainees gather to show they have met the Standards. The ability of the partnership to manage change is good. Trainees have not been adversely aware of the significant changes taking place and the quality of the provision has been maintained at a satisfactory standard overall.

18. Nevertheless, development planning lacks focus. The need to have much in place quickly has resulted in a wealth of required actions which are insufficiently prioritised to enable a structured and coherent approach to tackling them. Currently these are not shared sufficiently across the partnership so that all partners can support the actions and drive the improvements forward. Systems for sharing these priorities are hampered by the lack of opportunities for professional tutors to meet and poor attendance at mentor meetings.

19. All aspects of the capacity to improve are at least satisfactory. The absence of secure data on trainee progress and patterns over time limits the provider's ability to judge the effectiveness of actions already taken. The provider has made a good start in tackling issues arising from the changes to the management of the partnership, but many initiatives are new and their impact on the progress made by trainees is yet to be seen. The inconsistencies in provision, existing as a result of quality assurance systems which are not yet fully embedded, result in some trainees making only satisfactory progress from their starting points. Current and past trainees are very positive about their training and all partners are fully committed to supporting the continued development and improvement of the programme.

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

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?		3
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	3
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?	3
	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?	3
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?		3

<sup>1</sup> 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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