

Birmingham Advisory & Support Services

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address

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Inspection dates

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Lead inspector

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by two 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. The Birmingham Advisory and Support Service (BASS) is part of Birmingham local authority (School Effectiveness Division). BASS first became involved in training teachers in 1998, as a designated recommending body, to meet the recruitment needs of Birmingham schools. It offers routes to qualified teacher status (QTS) for primary and secondary teachers through employment-based initial teacher training. There are places for 26 Teacher Development Agency funded secondary trainees (priority and non-priority subjects in the 11-16 age range) and 17 primary places. The current primary cohort has increased to 22 because of a small number of additional self-funded trainees. All the training takes place at the Martineau Education Centre and in Birmingham schools. BASS is currently working with 32 schools.
4. The partnership's priority is to meet the needs of Birmingham's diverse schools. It does so by recruiting locally and encouraging applications from all sectors of society, including from under-represented groups. It is successful at recruiting to its target number, particularly so for the primary route. At the time of the inspection there were 22 primary trainees and 22 secondary trainees on the programme.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the rigorous selection procedures, which recruit significant numbers of trainees from under-represented groups and result in very high numbers of trainees being appointed from BASS to Birmingham schools
 - the quality of centre-based training, which prepares primary trainees well for their school experiences
 - the leadership's responsiveness to local and national initiatives raising trainees' awareness of current educational developments
 - the promotion of team work and collaboration amongst trainees, which strengthens their capacity to be good teachers.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' attainment and progress the provider should:
- improve the consistency of school-based training
 - ensure the trainees' individual training plans and subject knowledge audits are tailored more precisely to their personal development needs
 - conduct a more rigorous evaluation of all aspects of their provision
 - ensure the development plan includes clear objectives, lines of accountability and well defined success criteria that focus on trainees' outcomes.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the BASS partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. This is because the programme leadership and management are delivering a good quality training programme that meets trainees' needs well. As a result, the success rate is very good and the recruitment of trainees, from the programme, to Birmingham schools is excellent.

8. The recruitment and selection procedures are well designed and identify those applicants with the potential and capability of complete the training successfully. There is a strong and successful emphasis on promoting equality of access and, as a result of its efforts, the programme recruits successfully from under-represented groups. The partnership is over-subscribed for places, particularly so for the primary route. There is a strong commitment to supplying local schools

with specialist secondary teachers. Consequently, the provider is willing to take calculated risks with those applying to secondary shortage subjects by accepting applicants with a strong potential for teaching, but who have lower academic qualifications. The retention rate for primary trainees remaining on the course is excellent. It is satisfactory for secondary trainees, reflecting the risks taken with some applicants, by the partnership, during the recruitment process.

9. Staff working in partnership schools and the centre work together closely during the selection process to ensure that they identify those who have the motivation and potential to achieve the Standards and the desire to teach. At the recruitment stage applicants are made fully aware of the intensive demands of the course and those who succeed in being selected are justifiably proud of their achievements. Once applicants have accepted their training place they meet with tutors to begin developing their individual training plans. These are created by modifying a generic plan with information arising from the interview process and by taking account of any relevant prior experience. This is a useful strategy that takes good account of applicants' prior achievements, but does not always lead to programmes that are sufficiently clear and focused on the individual needs of trainees. This sometimes impedes their rate of progress at the start of the programme. Subject knowledge audits are similarly constructed and, although satisfactory in quality, do not always extend trainees' understanding far beyond that required for the immediate lessons being planned.

10. Trainees' attainment is good overall. Although the provider judges trainees' attainment as outstanding the inspection evidence and the data presented for scrutiny confirm that it is good. Primary trainees' attainment is slightly better than secondary trainees, which partly reflects the stronger field the partnership is able to draw upon during recruitment and partly the fact that secondary trainees are not supported quite so well in schools.

11. The quality of training is good. The programme is designed well with an appropriate balance between centre-based training and trainees' practical experiences in schools. The quality and content of the centre-based training is good and sometimes outstanding. It is led by experienced and motivational tutors who inspire and enthuse trainees into wanting to put theory into practice. There is also good coverage of recent educational initiatives, such as, the Rose review of reading, the Williams report for mathematics and the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Much of what trainees learn from the centre-based training is used well during their teaching practice and observed by visiting tutors. School-based training is good. In the main, trainees are well supported by school-based trainer mentors who have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. Occasionally, school-based trainer mentors, who are sometimes new to the partnership, lack experience and, although conscientious, do not provide the high quality of support required. In the small number of situations where issues are identified with a trainee's school placement the provider acts quickly to remedy the situation.

12. The different components of the training programme link together well. Trainees' second school placement complements their main teaching experience by providing a contrasting teaching experience. There are good links between the

schools with, in some cases, trainees receiving additional supportive visits from their main school-based trainer mentor to ensure that they are continuing to make progress towards the targets set. School-based trainer mentors' knowledge about the content of centre-based training is generally satisfactory and, for this reason, opportunities to build on it in school placements are lessened.

13. The quality, deployment and use of resources across the partnership are good. The partnership invests considerable time and financial resources to ensure that trainees are supported well during their school placements with regular time set aside each week for meetings to discuss their progress. The deployment of professional tutors who also visit trainees regularly throughout the programme provides an additional layer of support that works well.

14. The arrangements for assessing trainees' progress and attainment against the Standards are good. Observations of lessons are often carried out thoroughly and used to determine key strengths and areas to improve. In the best practice, trainees and school-based trainer-mentors discuss and agree particular Standards on which to concentrate and assess the progress being achieved. The subsequent discussions that follow are exemplary because they are developmental and highlight, with very precise targets, how further improvement could be achieved. The information gathered is then used to inform the trainee's individual training plan by specifying specific learning opportunities that match the targets agreed. When this is not the case, trainees are not so clear about what they need to do next to improve. In contrast, the assessment of trainees' written assignments is good and trainees receive feedback, which although not referenced specifically to particular Standards provides useful guidance.

15. The final assessment of trainees' professional attributes and general teaching skills are by and large accurate. Moderation procedures work well and decisions about the pass/fail boundary are secure. However, inspection visits confirm the external examiner's findings that, for a few trainees, the assessments of their attainment are over-generous.

16. The partnership is good at promoting equality of opportunity and valuing diversity. Of particular note are the successful efforts being made to ensure that the numbers of trainees on the programme reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community. The partnership also encourages applications from candidates with disabilities and provides good levels of individual support where needed. The trainees' training experiences in partnership schools ensures that they are prepared very well for teaching in a culturally diverse society. The centre-based and school-based staff act as positive role models for trainees and exemplify the skills needed to work successfully with pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. As a result, the level of collaboration and team work amongst trainees is exemplary and strengthens their capacity to succeed in the classroom.

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

17. Overall, the leadership demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. Communications across the partnership are good and the leaders are accessible and responsive. There are clear aims for the future but these are not well known throughout the partnership. Development planning has improved aspects of provision but has not yet led to an upward trend of improvement in trainees' attainment. This is because not enough attention is paid to the identification of actions needed to raise trainees' outcomes. However, the partnership is well respected for delivering good quality training and producing trainees who are highly sought after by local schools.

18. Self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. The partnership's leadership has a satisfactory knowledge of the training programme's current strengths and areas for improvement. Information is gathered through well-established monitoring procedures that involve all partners. The findings are reported, in general terms, to the management and steering groups for consideration. Although this demonstrates comprehensive coverage the process is insufficiently diagnostic in identifying how to improve trainee outcomes. For example, although anecdotal evidence is available to explain why primary trainees do better than their secondary colleagues there is no clear rationale for the difference and consequently, no specific priority to improve matters. The self-evaluation document is detailed, well written and identifies appropriate priorities for development. However, it is not sufficiently rigorous or incisive enough and judgements do not take full account of all the evidence. For this reason and because the leadership have not applied Ofsted's grade descriptors accurately enough, their judgements about the partnership's effectiveness, are often over generous.

19. On a day-to-day basis the leadership is very alert to feedback and evaluations received from the different partners and they respond very quickly to put matters right when required; for example, in identifying the need for additional centre-based training focusing on positive behaviour management strategies to support trainees teaching in schools. This and other prompt action is greatly appreciated by those involved and ensures that trainees' development is supported appropriately.

20. Similarly, the leadership is good at responding quickly to national initiatives. This ensures trainees are up-to-date with educational developments and prepared well for their role in the classroom. The increased time allocated to centre-based training to cover the teaching of phonics and the coverage of the 14-19 curriculum, for example, demonstrates their preparedness. Furthermore, staff across the partnership are also innovative in their thinking about how best to support trainees. For example, the use of the interactive spreadsheet that is used with individual trainees to record their progress against the Standards and to set new targets where more evidence is required. The opportunity for trainees to have the use of a laptop computer is an example of the partnership's good approach to ensuring equality of opportunities. The good use of data gathered at an early stage of training to

generate some predictions about trainees' attainment by the end of the course, is another useful development. Although still in the early stage of being trialled it is helping to identify where additional support is required.

21. The quality of strategic planning is satisfactory. Although the partnership's leadership demonstrates a very clear vision to be an outstanding provider of initial teacher education, this is not stated in the medium and long-term improvement plans. Although these plans set out priorities that focus successfully on developing provision there is insufficient focus on improving trainees' outcomes, particularly those training to teach in secondary schools. The absence of named individuals with different responsibilities for leading each initiative and monitoring progress reduces the partnership's ability to determine, with accuracy, what has been achieved. This is further compounded by the fact that the success criteria are not sufficiently quantifiable and do not focus sharply enough on how each priority will impact on trainees.

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

| | | Employment-based routes |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees? | | 2 |
| Trainees' attainment | How well do trainees attain? | 2 |
| 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? | 2 |
| | 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? | 2 |
| 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 |

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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