

The King Edward's Consortium Graduate Teacher Training Partnership

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Foundation Office Edgbaston Park Road Birmingham B15 2UD
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Inspection dates	5 - 8 May 2009
Lead inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

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Reference no. 080190

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Introduction

1. The inspection was carried out by a team of Her Majesty's Inspectors and other specialist inspectors in accordance with the proposed *Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-2011)*.

The inspection drew upon evidence from all aspects of the inspection evaluation schedule as it impacted on the initial teacher education for those training to teach in secondary schools. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements or to sustain high quality outcomes. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

The provider

2. The King Edward's Consortium became a provider of initial teacher training in 2004. It is a small partnership of 14 schools serving the Birmingham area. The schools in the consortium reflect the diversity of the West Midlands area in terms of the ethnic, cultural and social make-up of the population. The partnership aims to provide its trainees with a rich breadth of training experiences. The consortium schools vary widely in nature. They include independent, comprehensive, grammar, and single sex schools and one school with boarding provision. The provider offers routes to qualified status through employment-based initial teacher education. There are places for trainees in priority and non-priority subjects in the 11-16 age range. At the time of the inspection, there were 22 trainees.

3. King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls is the lead school in the consortium and the headteacher of the school is chair of the leadership group. This group comprises the headteachers of the 14 schools in the consortium. A smaller strategy group has been formed this year. A full-time manager leads the training programme from a central resource base for training, which is situated at The King Edward's Foundation Office.

Provision in the secondary phase

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
- the consortium's ability to select and recruit high calibre trainees
 - the excellent communication across the partnership which ensures that all those involved in the training have a clear view of their role and of trainees' needs
 - the exemplary attention paid to the individual needs of the trainees and the creative response to any problems that emerge
 - the excellent use of available resources to support training
 - the readiness to embrace change and the clear vision for the future of the partnership which have resulted in consistently good trainee outcomes since the last inspection
 - the consortium's strong commitment to promote equality and diversity which ensures trainees receive the support they need to complete their training successfully and prepares them well to teach in schools with diverse communities.

Required Actions

5. In order to improve the quality of training across the partnership the provider should:
- introduce a well focused individual training plan to ensure consistent tracking of trainees' progress
 - develop the skills of all subject trainers so that they match those of the best in setting appropriate targets for trainees and reviewing their progress.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' subject knowledge and their ability to apply this to teaching, the partnership should:
- in conjunction with subject leaders, review the pre-course tasks required of trainees prior to starting their training
 - strengthen trainees' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical background underpinning their subjects.

7. In order to ensure that all members of the consortium contribute to improvement planning:

- involve all partners in the consortium in the formal evaluation of the quality of provision.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. Trainees' attainment by the end of their training is good overall. Over the last three years, there has been a consistently large proportion of trainees who have achieved very highly. Inspectors agree with the provider that, this year, trainees' overall attainment is good with most trainees judged to be at least good and just under a third outstanding. Very few emerge as satisfactory. Trainees develop into very reflective practitioners who rate their school experiences highly and are very enthusiastic about the breadth and depth of their training. They value the excellent support they receive, both in schools, and that provided centrally from the consortium training manager.

9. The consortium receives a large number of applications for the course from well-qualified graduates and fills all available places. Recruitment of trainees to teach shortage subjects is good, as is the recruitment of males. However, the number of trainees from minority ethnic groups is relatively low, consequently, attracting trainees from these groups remains a focus for recruitment. Selection procedures are rigorous and provide the challenge needed to identify those with the potential to become highly effective teachers. Staff in consortium schools speak positively of their involvement with the selection process and the typically high calibre of applicants. Over the past three years, completion rates have been high. A significant number of trainees move into teaching posts in consortium and other local schools.

10. The training combines effectively to produce trainees with the range of skills needed to make strong contributions to the development of their own learners. Trainees reflect on their teaching and evaluate their own strengths and areas for development well. They are refreshingly focused on the quality of learning outcomes for their students. Their lesson planning is of a very good quality, much of it is detailed and carefully structured to meet students' needs through a range of varied and interesting activities. Many trainees make a significant contribution to the work of their placement schools, immersing themselves fully in all aspects of school life. This prepares them well for the demands of teaching. As one trainee commented, 'I feel like a fully fledged member of staff, not a trainee and I enjoy this level of challenge'. Trainees have well developed skills in classroom management. A number of them commented on how these skills develop further after their second placement, having had the opportunity to refine their practice in different setting. Generally, the second placement is carefully selected and used thoughtfully to provide a contrasting experience for trainees. Liaison between the two placements is good.

11. The administration and organisation of the training is extremely efficient. The recent formation of a strategy group has strengthened management and strategic capacity. The decisions to employ a full-time training manager and increase administrative support are well-founded. Financial planning is a strength; issues are carefully considered by the strategy group and balanced decisions taken in order to improve trainee outcomes. Consortium documentation promotes high expectations and is clear and detailed for all partners. Trainees speak very highly of the personal support received from the training manager. She knows each of them well and is responsive to their individual needs. Every effort is made to ensure that trainees succeed. There are several instances of proactive responses made to issues or concerns, demonstrating excellent care and support for trainees including, for example, a change of placement to ensure improved progression for a trainee experiencing difficulties.

12. The training is very well resourced and all resources are thoughtfully allocated to respond to need. Trainees are provided with excellent tools to support their work; these include laptop computers and access to a variety of materials to enhance effective teaching and learning. Effective use is made of expertise within the consortium and this contributes well to central training. For example, the use of expert subject leaders to organise subject sessions in the last twelve months has strengthened subject training.

13. The coherence and overall quality of the training is good. In particular, the central professional studies training led by the training manager is outstanding. This models best practice in teaching, learning and professional behaviour. Trainees rate the effectiveness of these sessions very highly. They particularly appreciate the active, engaging nature and subsequent follow-up when professional and subject trainers encourage them to focus on their learning in the context of their placement school.

14. There are many outstanding and good schools in the consortium providing very sound experiences for trainees. School-based trainers have a clear understanding of their training roles and provide consistent support for trainees. Most trainees receive good feedback following lesson observations. Inspectors saw several examples of highly skilled mentoring where trainees were encouraged to reflect and evaluate their own progress and where sharply focused targets were set and followed up. However, some inconsistency remains in the quality of mentoring, as noted by trainees in their evaluations. Where mentoring is weaker, target setting lacks precision and sometimes refers to tasks rather than specific actions. The weekly tutorial records completed by trainees do not always provide detailed evidence of their learning conversations or of how targets are informing their training plans from week to week. Trainees' written assignments make a good contribution to the coherence of the training. The rationale for these is clear and pertinent and the marking is thorough and accurate as confirmed by external moderation. The current lack of a well-constructed, clear individual training plan is a weakness. At present, the initial and on-going audits drive the training but it is not

easy to track trainees' progress in all areas or relate their initial audits to their current performance. Revisions to this are planned for next year.

15. The individual needs of trainees are carefully assessed at the start of their training. Useful pre-course reading and tasks are identified but this aspect of the training is underdeveloped and trainees' subject knowledge could be extended even further. Trainees are regularly observed teaching by a range of staff, including their professional and subject trainers, the subject leader and the training manager. The numerous joint observations conducted have improved the consistency of teacher trainer evaluations of trainee performance. In addition, the appointment of specialist subject leaders and the introduction of subject specific sessions have improved the subject training. However, trainees' evaluations of these sessions are variable at this stage. Although trainees demonstrate good understanding of national issues and current priorities in education, some of them are less secure with the background literature and theory underpinning their subjects. Ensuring good development of subject specific knowledge remains a priority for subject leaders.

16. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The consortium meets all statutory requirements in this respect and pays careful attention to the implementation and impact of its equality policies. Trainees are well prepared for teaching in a diverse community and demonstrate very good understanding of the issues. The supportive relationships evident between all partners in the consortium help to build trainees' confidence. Trainees are prepared, and encouraged, to voice any concerns. They appreciate their views are valued and listened to, and know that any issues are followed up as a matter of importance. Completion rates are very high due to the careful attention paid to individual needs.

17. Procedures for assessing the trainees against the Standards are sound. These are monitored closely by the training manager. In the best examples of feedback to trainees, it is clear what they need to do in order to make progress. However, the lack of a coherent individual training plan hinders the systematic and consistent overview of trainees' progress by trainers in schools. At present, the strong self-motivation of the trainees in gathering evidence of meeting the Standards, and the diligence of the training manager in checking these, overcomes the lack of a formal training plan to some extent. External moderation confirms the consortium judgements of final assessments of the trainees. Inspectors agree that final assessments are accurate, but those at the outstanding/good boundary are over-generous.

Capacity to improve further and/or to sustain high quality outcomes

Grade: 2

18. The consortium has a good grasp of its strengths and areas for development. This has resulted in consistently high quality outcomes for trainees over the past three years. At all levels, members of the partnership demonstrate clear vision, a commitment to improvement and good knowledge of the consortium and the

trainees. The small size, particularly the small number of partner schools, facilitates excellent communication as well as a high level of common understanding. This ensures that all partners involved in training have a clear view of their role and expectations and of trainees' needs. The provider's documentation is exemplary in this respect and provides much useful, clear guidance for consortium schools.

19. The previous unpublished inspection report in 2006 identified several areas for improvement, including improving the auditing of trainees' subject knowledge and follow-up and strengthening the role of subject trainers. These issues have been tackled robustly to good effect. In order to inform its self-evaluation, the consortium draws upon a good range of evidence, including internal and external evaluations, the views of current and past trainees and twice-yearly reviews from headteachers in partner schools. There is a prompt response to these evaluations and evidence of immediate impact from actions taken; these include, for example, improving arrangements for consistency in the marking of assignments and strengthening aspects of subject specific training. The training manager has a very detailed knowledge of schools and individual departments and provides regular opportunities for informal feedback. Despite the good opportunities that exist for informal feedback, at present not all school-based trainers are involved in formal evaluations of training. Although the consortium evaluates its work, some partnership schools do not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of their own contribution and the subsequent outcomes for trainees.

20. Since the last inspection, a new management structure including a full time training manager and increased administrative support has been established. Leadership of the consortium anticipates change admirably and is extremely responsive in driving improvements. Expectations of school partners are high and there is improved support to enhance their effectiveness. Professional tutors are active participants in regular consortium meetings.

21. The newly formed strategy group is highly effective. It meets routinely to discuss issues on national and local horizons, decide on steps for improvement, and implement change. Creative solutions are sought to potential barriers. Evidence of this forward-thinking, proactive approach includes the excellent succession planning leading to the funding of an eight-week transition period between training managers to ensure a smooth handover and maintain consistency and continuity for trainees. Training programmes are constantly under review and revisions are made in order to ensure that trainees are familiar with national educational developments and priorities in secondary teaching. As a result, trainees demonstrate a good understanding of initiatives to improve literacy, including the implications of the Rose review in the teaching of reading. They also show a good awareness of the importance of meeting individual needs in the planning and delivery of their lessons and are sensitive to the particular needs of learners with English as an additional language. The training manager and subject leaders are effective at identifying potential barriers to subject improvement and ambitious for success. They have implemented changes to practice that are already influencing the pre-course materials and assignments for next year's trainees.

22. Good planning for improvement results in the large majority of trainees fulfilling their potential. There is evidence of maintaining good quality outcomes for trainees over recent years and continuing improvements in monitoring procedures over the past twelve months. Most notably, the arrangements to quality assure assessments have been strengthened through increased joint lesson observations. There is an increasing focus on the evaluation of performance and outcomes, through improving the collection and rigour of data collection and analysis. The current format and composition of improvement plans are sound with further refinements in hand. Planning is linked to priorities, but there is some lack of aspiration in several of the priorities as stated in the improvement plan. These should be more closely linked to achieving outstanding outcomes for trainees, many of whom have excellent potential. Inevitably, some of the recent improvements made to training and provision are in the early stages of implementation and, although very promising in potential, have yet to have a sustained impact on outcomes for trainees. However, the overall capacity to improve, given the impact and outcomes achieved at this stage, is good.

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?		2
Trainees' attainments	How well do trainees attain?	2
The factors contributing to trainees' attainments	To what extent do recruitment / selection support high quality outcomes?	2
	How well 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?	1
The quality of the provision across the partnership	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
Equality and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and discrimination?	1

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality outcomes

		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?		2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
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?		2

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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