

George Spencer Training School EBITT

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Arthur Mee Road Stapleford Nottingham NG9 7EW
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Inspection dates	29 June – 3 July 2009
Lead inspector	Rhona Seviour HMI

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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. George Spencer Training School employment-based initial teacher training partnership is a network of two primary and fourteen secondary schools in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. George Spencer Training School leads the partnership which includes schools serving inner city and rural areas, many with specialist school status. A number of schools are part of the East Midlands Training Schools Consortium. The partnership seeks to produce high calibre teachers through the provision of excellent individualised training for all trainees. It currently offers 11 places on employment-based routes to qualified teacher status (QTS); one of these places is for the 5-11 age range and ten are for the 11-16 and 14-19 age ranges. Ten of the trainees receive a salary grant and one is self-funded.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
 - the attention paid to the recruitment and selection of the trainees which ensures that they are very well-chosen for the employment-based teacher training route
 - the consistently good quality of both the central and school-based training which contributes to trainees' enjoyment of their training and their success in achieving the Standards to a good and, increasingly, an outstanding level
 - trainees' understanding of how to promote effective learning and their willingness to try out different approaches in order to engage and stimulate students
 - the effective monitoring and assessment of trainees' progress which ensures that trainees have a clear view of their strengths and weaknesses and enables training to be tailored to their individual needs
 - the exemplary care and support trainees receive from members of the subject departments or, for the primary trainee, the schools in which they are placed.

Required actions

5. In order to improve the quality of the training, the partnership must:
 - reduce the burden of paperwork so that trainees are better able to illustrate their achievement of the Standards.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - extend trainees' good subject knowledge by increasing their awareness of the breadth of literature relevant to the teaching of their subject and ensuring that all trainees experience regular visits from their external subject moderator
 - ensure that the arrangements for the training and assessment of trainees with significant relevant experience are fully understood by both school-based and central trainers.

7. In order to further improve the provision, the partnership should:
- strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning through a sharper focus on trainees' outcomes, increased use of quantitative measures and more active involvement of partnership schools.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. The overall effectiveness of the George Spencer Training School EBITT is good. The provision has improved over the last three years and the partnership's recruitment and selection, use of resources and promotion of equality and diversity are now outstanding.
9. Trainees' attainments by the end of the training programme are good. Given their ability and starting points all groups of trainees achieve in line with their potential. Over the last three years, the proportion of trainees achieving the Standards at the highest level has increased and inspection evidence confirms the partnership's judgement that a quarter of the current cohort of trainees now do so.
10. The rigorous recruitment and selection procedures ensure that trainees are very well-chosen for the employment-based route into teaching. There are considerably more applicants than places, particularly for those wishing to undertake training in the primary phase or physical education and, over the last three years, the partnership has met its targets for recruitment to priority subjects. This is important given the difficulties local schools experience in recruiting teachers of these subjects, particularly mathematics. In 2008/9 the recruitment of trainees from a minority ethnic background exceeded national benchmarks. The partnership has also succeeded in recruiting a male trainee to its sole primary training place for 2009/10. The effective personal and professional support trainees receive results in consistently high completion rates, with the majority of trainees moving into posts in local schools.
11. Trainees selected have very strong personal characteristics and rise to the challenge of the training programme's high expectations. They form good relationships with other professionals and are highly motivated by the training. They aspire to be outstanding teachers and, because of its emphasis during the training, reflect critically on their practice. The good quality of both the central and school-based training contributes significantly to trainees' enjoyment of the programme and their success in achieving the Standards.
12. The provision of a school-based subject mentor and tutor, with whom trainees have a weekly meeting, together with visits from central staff, ensures that very good attention is given to the development of trainees' subject and general professional expertise. For both aspects, thorough initial audits of trainees' needs are used very effectively to produce highly tailored, individual training plans which are regularly reviewed and adjusted throughout the training.

13. Mentors' sharp focus on the development of trainees' subject knowledge ensures that this is one of the trainees' strengths. The opportunity to attend subject days organised in conjunction with other regional providers of teacher education and their experience of placements in strong departments or schools, including four weeks in a contrasting setting, also make a very positive impact on trainees' understanding of their subject. Visits made by subject specialists from other partnership schools, to observe trainees' teaching and moderate subject mentors' judgements, adds a further layer of effective subject support. Although both subject mentors and trainees have found these visits to be very useful, they have not occurred regularly enough for a few trainees. Despite the strengths of their subject training and their understanding of National Curriculum subject and/or examination requirements, few trainees are aware of the breadth of literature which could helpfully inform their teaching practice. The primary trainee has attended science teacher training at a local university and received subject guidance from the employing school's staff and an external subject specialist. Nonetheless, there have been limited opportunities to meet and share experiences with other trainees in the same phase.

14. Partnership schools are good and, in some cases, outstanding venues for training. The lead school's training status and its focus on innovative approaches to teaching and learning exert a strong influence on the trainees. They speak enthusiastically about the sessions they have attended and the impact of these on their teaching. The weekly twilight sessions, led by experienced teachers from partnership schools, combined with effective mentoring and tutoring, ensure that the trainees understand exactly what they need to do to promote good learning. Trainees observed during the inspection were skilful at managing their classes and used a varied range of teaching strategies, including collaborative and accelerated learning approaches, to interest and engage their students. The strongest trainees were highly creative in their teaching and had the confidence to try out new ideas to make it stimulating.

15. The consistency in the quality of training, including regular observation of trainees' teaching and close attention to the setting of targets aligned with the Standards, provides trainees with ample opportunity to fulfil their potential. Frequent detailed feedback ensures that they are well aware of their strengths and weaknesses and know precisely what they need to do to improve. In addition, the robust monitoring of trainees' progress by both school-based and central trainers ensures that any concerns are identified and addressed quickly. Assessment arrangements are rigorous and operate consistently across the partnership. Trainees' achievement is assessed continuously throughout the training and formally against individual Standards at the end of each term. Regular joint observation of trainees' teaching by all those involved in the training ensures the accuracy and consistency of judgements. Inspectors' judgements are in line with the partnership's evaluations of trainee performance.

16. Although the training is good overall, on occasions, some opportunities to model best practice are missed. For instance, whereas much of the central training exemplifies good teaching practice, this does not occur consistently. Similarly, the requirements and assessment criteria of the three assignments trainees produce are unclear and the feedback provided does not always reflect the best assessment and

marking practice seen in schools. The partnership is aware that, in its efforts to improve the consistency and quality of the training and assessment, some paperwork requirements are excessive and lead to trainees spending a disproportionate amount of time on this. For example, some written evaluations involve unhelpful duplication of effort. Furthermore, despite being very well organised, trainees are not selective enough in their choice of evidence of their achievement of the Standards and this leads to the creation of an unnecessarily large number of files. Rather paradoxically, trainees make good use of information and communication technology in their teaching but do not always make use of it when presenting evidence of their achievement of the Standards.

17. Resources are deployed very efficiently and effectively to support the training. The level of human resources allocated is particularly impressive with trainees receiving two hours of one-to-one mentoring and tutoring each week and a further two hours of central training. This time is very well used and results in trainees' having a secure grasp of the breadth of a teachers' role. In addition, trainees receive invaluable support from members of the departments in which they are placed and, in the case of the primary trainee, from the whole school staff. Even when they are not hosting a trainee, partnership schools are willing to contribute to the training by leading sessions organised centrally or by taking on external subject moderation roles. Trainees have very good access to information and communication technology and all those involved in the programme benefit from access to course materials on the partnership's website.

18. Schools value the work of the partnership and feel well supported and guided by the central team and the comprehensive documentation. Trainers are clear about what is expected of them and both they and the trainees feel that communication is a strength. School-based trainers find the central training sessions helpful and informative but, although a requirement of the partnership agreement, they do not always attend. The central team follows up non-attendance and makes efforts to ensure trainers are well informed. Nonetheless, the inspection found some misunderstanding amongst trainers about the flexibility to adjust the programme and the final assessment for those trainees with substantial relevant experience.

19. The partnership meets its aim of providing an individually tailored programme for each trainee and its care and support for their well-being is exemplary. The impact of its equalities policies is monitored very closely and trainees comment very favourably on the speed with which the central team deals with their questions or concerns. Over the last three years there have been no incidents of unlawful discrimination and trainees are very complimentary about the support they receive. They feel exceptionally well prepared by their training to take up their first teaching post and also to teach in schools with challenging and culturally diverse populations.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality **Grade: 2**

20. The partnership has good capacity for further improvement. Over the last three years, changes made in response to the evaluation of its provision and a

determination to achieve excellence in all it does have led to an improvement in the outcomes for trainees. In particular, improvements to individual training plans ensure that trainees' experiences are coherent and progressive. In addition, the systems, procedures and training now ensure that all trainees develop a secure knowledge of how to teach their subject.

21. Self-evaluation is based upon a mix of formal and informal processes and provides the partnership with an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a very prompt response to any weaknesses that are detected and any necessary adjustments are made quickly. Termly surveys of the views of subject mentors, school-based tutors and trainees inform the partnership's evaluation and, while providing valuable insights, they tend to focus on whether activities have occurred rather than their impact. There are tight systems to monitor each trainee's experience and each school does an end-of-year evaluation. The partnership has begun to analyse trainee outcomes in relation to individual Standards but this, and the use of statistical data over time, are at a relatively early stage.

22. The processes supporting the internal and external moderation of assessment are robust and ensure the accuracy of judgements of all trainees' progress and achievements and security of the final assessment of trainees. The external moderator's feedback is used well by the partnership to help it identify priorities for improvement.

23. The partnership makes a positive contribution to teacher recruitment and workforce development in local schools. During the inspection, staff spoke of the positive impact of their roles as mentors, subject moderators or tutors, on their own subject expertise and coaching skills, and also of the opportunity to benchmark their own provision against that of other partnership schools. The partnership's leaders and managers are dedicated to securing the very best outcomes for the trainees and are willing to make any necessary changes to the programme to do so. They take their own professional development seriously and participate in local networks of teacher educators and training schools. The principal of the lead school chairs the executive committee and manages the director of initial teacher training, who has day-to-day responsibility for the partnership. By doing so, the principal plays an active part in the partnership's work and strongly influences its direction. Staff in partner schools also contribute to decision-making through their membership of committees and working groups. This helps to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and takes full account of recent educational developments and initiatives. For instance, training has been adjusted to include the Rose review, Williams report, innovative approaches to teaching and learning and developments in the 14-19 curriculum.

24. The partnership's improvement planning is linked to the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation of its provision and clearly reflects its ambition to be an outstanding provider. The director of initial teacher training is very determined to achieve this improvement and the appointment of an assistant indicates good attention to succession planning and consideration for the stability of the partnership's operational leadership in the longer term. The executive committee provides strong strategic leadership and ensures the good quality of the partnership's improvement planning. Nonetheless, this process does not focus

sharply enough on trainees' outcomes. In part, this reflects the under-use of quantitative data when evaluating provision over time and also the absence of quantitative measures for some targets. Although the improvement plan is prepared with the involvement of partnership staff, the priorities are not communicated well enough. In its self-evaluation, the partnership acknowledges the need for schools to be more actively engaged in its work, including self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

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?	1
	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?	1
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?	1

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?		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?		2
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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