

Oxford Brookes University

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Lead inspector

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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

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. Oxford Brookes University works in partnership with a wide range of schools to provide initial teacher education (ITE) leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the primary and secondary phases and to qualified teacher learning and skills status (QTLS) in the further education (FE) phase. There are over 500 partner primary schools mainly located within the city of Oxford and in Oxfordshire, although there are also partner schools in neighbouring counties and a few further afield. Almost 100 secondary partnership schools are spread across seven local authorities. Partner schools have strong relationships with the university through links in particular secondary subjects or through primary education. The university is one of the largest providers of continuing professional development for practising teachers and teaching assistants in the country. The university is a major provider of newly qualified teachers to schools in the region, including in priority secondary subjects.

4. The university also provides two courses leading to QTLS. One is run in partnership with three FE colleges to provide part-time in-service training for some 70 trainees in those colleges and in local adult and community settings; the other is full-time and pre-service.

A commentary on the provision

5. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes.
 - The attainment of trainees is consistently good.
 - The use of resources to promote good attainment and support trainees is good across all phases.
 - The good promotion of equality of opportunity to ensure that trainees make good progress.
 - The university's responsiveness to change.

6. There are particularly strong features in some programmes that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision.
 - The outstanding cohesion and collaborative working across the primary phase.

7. The following recommendation should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees.
 - Improve communication across phases in order to share best practice and promote consistency, particularly in respect of judging trainees' attainment and progress.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

8. Oxford Brookes University works in partnership with around 500 schools to provide initial teacher education (ITE) in the 5–11 age range for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) course, and in the 5–11 and 3–7 age ranges for postgraduate trainees. At the time of the inspection there were 253 trainees following the three-year BA course (across all three years) and 254 on the one-year postgraduate course, of whom 58 are training to teach children aged 3–7 and 196 to teach pupils aged 5–11. There are currently 102 trainees on the four-year work-based BA course. The postgraduate course includes the option of taking up to three modules at level 7 (Masters level).

Key strengths

9. The key strengths are:
 - the good attainment and outstanding progress of students, irrespective of their varied starting points
 - communication across the partnership, which ensures high expectations and consistency
 - very effective team working among enthusiastic, committed and knowledgeable trainers at all levels
 - the commitment and enthusiasm of trainees, their outstanding professional attitudes to their development, and the capacity to identify their own learning priorities
 - the outstanding support provided for individual trainees, particularly those who are at risk of failure
 - the innovative work-based route, which promotes enhanced access to training for school-based trainees and helps meet local recruitment needs very effectively.

Recommendations

10. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider/partnership should:
 - improve trainees' understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the way in which it links to learning in Key Stage 1.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

11. Trainees' attainment is good. The current attainment of final-year trainees following the three-year BA course is strong and reinforces the pattern of good attainment over time, with over 90% of trainees being graded good or

better in each of the last four years. Over the same period none has been judged inadequate. The proportion of trainees on the four-year work-based course whose attainment is judged to be outstanding is rising rapidly and in 2009 represented 41% of the final year's cohort. This innovative route into teaching is particularly effective in promoting good attainment for locally-based trainees, many of whom join the course from non-traditional backgrounds and with lower academic qualifications than those on other courses, but with a wealth of practical classroom experience. Trainees on the postgraduate course also attain well because they are very well supported. The training programme recognises their need for a clear focus on professional attributes and the practical application of academic knowledge and skills. The four themed weeks are particularly effective in developing a very good understanding of how children learn and of teaching across the curriculum. Trainees on the three-year BA course are exceptionally well prepared for a career in teaching and are well regarded by partner schools. Inspectors agree that trainees make excellent progress, particularly those who join the course with relatively low or non-standard qualifications. The provider's assessment of trainees is very accurate.

12. Trainees attain particularly well in those professional attributes which reflect strong relationships, an awareness of teachers' professional responsibilities, communication and working as part of a team. This is a very accurate reflection of the characteristics of trainees observed and spoken with during the inspection. Observations of teaching confirm the high expectations trainees have of themselves and pupils. Almost all trainees quickly form very good relationships with pupils and school-based colleagues. School mentors and teacher tutors confirm that trainees quickly become an integral part of the school team and make a full contribution to school life, including attending and contributing to parents' evenings, leading extra-curricular clubs and accompanying classes on school visits.
13. Recruitment and selection are outstanding. The university attracts trainees from a wide range of academic backgrounds. This is particularly true of the work-based course. The support received by potential workplace-based trainees is effective in ensuring they are aware of the very demanding nature of the course and are well prepared to apply. Selection procedures are rigorous. The tests of basic skills in English and mathematics, together with the teaching task and paired interviews, are used very effectively to inform trainees' early development priorities. While the university is successful in recruiting a high proportion of mature trainees, recruitment rates for minority ethnic trainees are below average. The university has put in place a range of strategies in an attempt to increase the number of applications from minority ethnic candidates. These include attendance at recruitment fairs in inner city areas and the promotion of teaching as a career in local schools with an ethnically diverse population. However, there is little evidence of the impact of these initiatives on applications. Trainees speak highly of the selection process and this is confirmed by a recent survey of trainees, when 94% of respondents rated the selection process as good or very good. Non-completion and withdrawal rates for the primary ITE courses are below the

sector average. Following recruitment, procedures for ensuring all statutory requirements are met are rigorous and robust.

14. Training and assessment are outstanding. There is a strong focus on the individual needs of trainees, providing them with tailored support and guidance to overcome, for example, lack of confidence, dyslexia and weaknesses in subject knowledge. This very good pastoral and academic support is a significant strength of the provision. Trainees and schools speak very highly of the speed and efficacy of support for individual trainees. There is a strong relationship between lesson observations, weekly reviews of progress, trainees' reflections on their practice and the outstanding progress they make. They are proactive and enthusiastic and are instrumental in identifying any gaps in their knowledge and experience and actively seek opportunities to take full advantage of all the high quality training on offer. There is an excellent balance between theory and practice. Trainees are confident in their understanding of pedagogy and use professional studies effectively to strengthen their teaching. Trainees are very well prepared for each placement. They are very well prepared to meet the learning needs of individual pupils and have a good understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity.
15. A key strength is the accuracy of the provider's assessments of the individual trainee's strengths and areas for development. The three pathways for BA trainees, which enable them to pursue a particular interest in the education of gifted and talented pupils, those with special educational needs or the development of communication, language and literacy, in greater depth, make a significant contribution to trainees' enjoyment of the course. These pathways prepare them well for assuming additional responsibilities in schools.
16. School placements are carefully selected and matched to the needs of trainees to ensure there is the right balance of experience. Additional school experience provides exceptional opportunities for trainees to follow their specific interest, such as for the trainee on the three-year BA course who spent two weeks in a special school. Excellent communication between all partners contributes significantly to a set of shared ambitions and a vision for improvement. There is excellent support and training for mentors and teacher tutors, resulting in high quality school-based training.
17. Course and school experience handbooks are well planned and clear. This clarity is particularly important in ensuring that expectations of all partners are clear and explicit. As a result there is a shared understanding of exactly what experiences trainees will enjoy on their school placements and when these will happen. School placement documentation is used very effectively to ensure there is a clear 'line of sight' so that trainees' needs and reflections, lesson observations and weekly reviews feed into the interim reviews which inform the final report.
18. The engagement of pupils in lessons observed was at least good and much was outstanding; the enthusiasm and sustained concentration came directly

from the well-focused teaching. The deployment of adults, such as support staff, is very good; lesson plans have briefs for teaching assistants, with key questions, learning observations and information on assessment. Trainees' progress files are a real strength; the progress of each trainee is tracked very carefully in considerable detail. Excellent planning from placement to placement results in a clear progression in trainees' attainment. However, not all trainees have a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and how it links to that in Key Stage 1.

19. The excellent resources are used to very good effect. Trainees say they feel well supported in respect of physical resources such as books and teaching aids. Very well qualified, committed and experienced staff provide trainees with excellent support which is very carefully tailored to their individual needs. This is particularly true for those trainees who may be having difficulties. These trainees are exceptionally well supported and are highly appreciative of the way the university helps them get back on track. Schools and trainees also speak positively about the virtual learning environment, 'Brookes Virtual', and the ease of obtaining on-line resources, information and guidance.
20. The promotion of equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and eliminating harassment and unlawful discrimination are good. There are very robust policies relating to harassment and bullying, with secure evidence from case studies of prompt and effective action by the university on any concern raised. Trainees make at least good progress, with no significant differences between groups. There is very good preparation of trainees to teach pupils with special educational needs. As a result of effective actions to address their concerns, trainees are increasingly confident in their capacity to teach all pupils regardless of their individual needs. Effective links between modern foreign languages and the promotion of an awareness of diversity represent good collaborative working to improve outcomes for trainees. However, there remains some vagueness from a few trainees about how they could engage children in celebrating diversity.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 1

21. The provider has outstanding capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and is already taking effective action to improve areas of provision which are not outstanding.
22. The quality of partnership working is outstanding, with partner schools very committed to the continuing improvement of the provision. Local networks are a real strength and aid the excellent communication between the university and partner schools. Highly effective communication ensures the development needs of trainees are rapidly and very well met. There is great consistency in the high quality school-based training. Partner schools feel fully involved evaluating, developing and improving courses. There is very good, well-focused and up-to-date training for school-based mentors and equally good

opportunities for partners to moderate judgements at the end of placement meetings. There is effective, differentiated training for those mentors new to the partnership. Schools view the partnership as a valuable source of professional development for their staff, and a potential source of skilled and highly motivated teachers. The university makes a very significant contribution to the in-service training of teachers and others working in schools. This wide range of training provision significantly enhances the expertise of tutors and lecturers and their understanding of the development needs of trainees and partner schools.

23. The effectiveness of planning and taking action for improvement is outstanding. Self-evaluation is robust, detailed and accurate, with good evidence of progress on identified priorities which have been used to inform the revalidated course structure. Evaluations of how well the provider is doing involve a wide range of partners, including trainees, tutors, mentors, schools and school network leaders. In consequence, the provider knows itself well and has identified appropriate priorities for the future. The analysis of trainees' attainment over time is very accurate and informs priorities for improvement. Trainees' views are sought and quickly acted on. As a result, provision for teaching trainees about the promotion of cultural awareness has improved significantly. Planning for improvement is frequent and focused on the most important area to address. All of the university's partners are fully committed to continuous improvement.
24. Very robust quality assurance procedures are a strong feature of the provider's work. Reports from external examiners confirm this has been a strength over time. Regular visits to schools by experienced university tutors involve joint observations, interviews with trainees, teacher tutors and mentors and detailed scrutiny of trainees' files. School placements are very carefully planned to ensure they closely match trainees' needs.
25. The way in which the university anticipates and responds to change is outstanding. The primary programme revalidation has been seen as an opportunity to embed some key areas for development, including a greater focus on promoting an awareness of diversity through closer links with primary languages and the embedding of cross-curricular themes. For the BA trainees on their final school experience there is a highly effective focus on teaching English and communication skills. Subject leaders have a very good understanding of priorities in their subject and monitor the quality of trainees' teaching in their subjects. The response to the national priority of improving the teaching of phonics has been impressive, and has resulted in trainees feeling significantly more confident. Trainees understand the importance of developing practical skills in mathematics and use information and communication technology very effectively in their teaching. They are familiar with the relationship between the different strands of Every Child Matters and the impact of pupils' well-being on their learning. Leadership at all levels evinces a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and change in order to ensure trainees receive a high quality training and are very well prepared to teach.

26. The university has good improvement plans in place, with a clear focus on using the new course programmes to raise trainees' attainment and increase the proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding. The provider's record of improvement, coupled with thoughtful and committed leadership and effective management, results in an outstanding capacity to improve.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

27. Oxford Brookes University offers a one-year, full-time postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) leading to the award of qualified teacher status (QTS). Trainees can choose to undertake Masters-level credits through level seven modules to be awarded a postgraduate certificate, or can maintain their study at level six and receive the award of professional graduate certificate in education (Prof. GCE) with qualified teacher status (QTS). Training is provided in seven secondary subjects: music, science, mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages, English, and religious education. At the time of the inspection there were 130 trainees enrolled on the secondary programme. The university operates in partnership with 95 secondary schools spanning seven local authorities.

Key strengths

28. The key strengths are:
- the high quality of professional attributes demonstrated by both current and former trainees
 - effective recruitment and selection procedures, which support the good and sometimes outstanding progress of trainees, especially in securing their subject knowledge
 - the good quality of schools and the very high commitment of partnership staff to provide good quality training to help trainees to reach their potential
 - the high quality support for trainees' personal well-being, individual needs and their personal development.

Recommendations

29. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider should:
- provide trainees with clearer and more regular assessment of the quality of their overall progress
 - improve the quality and consistency of the feedback given to trainees while on school placements, so that they know how well they are progressing in relation to the QTS Standards.
30. In order to improve the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning the provider should:
- establish ways of involving all training partners in setting improvement priorities which are tightly focused on outcomes for trainees.
31. In order to improve the quality of training the partnership should:

- review how management information can be used more effectively to monitor trends in trainees' progress and attainment on school placements, underpin more detailed self-assessment in schools and inform plans which continually shape improvement for the partnership as a whole.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

32. The large majority of trainees make at least good progress and for an increasing proportion of trainees it is outstanding. The attainment of over 80% of trainees was good or outstanding over the last two years. This is a result of an effective combination of the trainees' ability to critique their own development throughout the programme, the good training they receive in partnership schools and support from visiting university tutors. Groups of trainees make comparable progress, with no significant differences in achievement by gender or ethnicity, but there is some variability in levels of attainment across the secondary subjects. The provider acknowledges the need to continue to raise the proportion of trainees attaining outstanding levels of achievement, and this has informed key targets in the providers' strategic plan for this year.
33. Recruitment and selection procedures are good and meet all statutory requirements. Recruitment of trainees is through a rigorous selection process for each subject to determine the candidate's potential as a teacher, in both their personal qualities and intellectual capacity to cope with the demands of the programme. Trainees confirm they find the interview process both challenging and useful in helping them understand the expectations of the university and how to focus on subject knowledge for teaching, both pre- and post-enrolment. Trainees have good ownership of their individual subject knowledge development records and use these effectively as a source to guide their independent study in addressing gaps in their knowledge of what they need to teach in schools. While retention has remained high for several years the provider acknowledges a slight fall in retention in 2007/08 of black and minority ethnic trainees and trainees educated outside the United Kingdom. This prompted a sharper focus on assessing the needs of trainees at the interview stage. The impact of good recruitment and selection processes is further validated by the high proportions of trainees who successfully secure their first teaching positions, both in partnership schools and schools local to the university. Employers confirm that the provider is attracting appropriate trainees for the programme who progress on to be high-achieving newly qualified teachers.
34. Trainees are conscientious and a highlight of their attainment is their great professionalism. Mentors, professional tutors and employers comment very favourably on the maturity of trainees in quickly developing professional working relationships with new colleagues and their ability to establish high expectations of students. Trainees show a good understanding of statutory

frameworks which govern practices and processes in teaching and education more widely, and are adept at seeking out how roles and responsibilities of key professionals in schools support students' learning.

35. Trainees possess good, and sometimes outstanding, subject knowledge, which enables them to teach confidently in their specialist subject area and be open-minded in exploring new teaching strategies under the guidance of experienced mentors. The majority of trainees are able to determine how best to use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons which are engaging for students. Most trainees understand why particular teaching approaches work with certain groups of students. Features of good or better practice include trainees' effective use of probing questioning to assess learning and an ability to sustain the pace of learning for students. Many trainees develop good quality learning resources, often using information and communication technology (ICT) to engage students. Overall, trainees are less secure in their knowledge of how to effectively use their theoretical grasp of assessment for learning in practical ways that personalises learning for students. Some trainees find it challenging to apply assessment data in planning targeted learning but show a willingness to persevere with this as a frequent target in their weekly development.
36. The quality of training and assessment is good. Trainees can confidently articulate how good subject studies sessions at the university provide them with creative ideas to explore through various teaching strategies, and how these sessions make very clear links between centre-based work and the application of this knowledge in each school placement. Mentors confirm that trainees often have well-developed subject knowledge, enriching their work in school. Trainees find the range of professional studies sessions useful in developing knowledge of Every Child Matters and 14 to 19 Diploma pathways, but some trainees report that professional studies lack precise learning outcomes and therefore the learning intentions against the QTS Standards are not always transparent.
37. Assessment processes are clearly mapped into programme documentation and there are clear guidelines for specific assessment responsibilities of school-based trainers and university tutors. Processes for day-to-day feedback to trainees and formal reports at key points of assessment are well defined, as confirmed by external examiners. Trainees' teaching is regularly observed and they appreciate the often detailed lesson observation feedback about how to improve their teaching. Individual trainee profiles assess progress against the QTS Standards to ensure they are met by the end of the programme. However, the recorded outcomes for trainees do not generate a clear enough picture of the progress of each trainee. Qualitative written lesson observation feedback and reporting against the Standards does not provide summative judgements against grading criteria used by the provider. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate trainees' overall progress. Weekly meetings focus on strengths and targets for improvement but lack sufficient detail to demonstrate precisely how trainees are making progress. The lack of a regular summative evaluation of progress prevents some trainees from

attaining higher standards because targets to stretch their achievement are not always derived from a rigorous picture of their progress.

38. Most trainees have a clear understanding of how they are assessed against the QTS Standards but a small minority of trainees comment there is sometimes confusion about how to evidence the Standards within the modular framework, the written assignments and files used on each school placement. Training undertaken during school placements is well planned and mentors and professional tutors are highly committed to offering the very best training and personalised support for trainees. They carefully plan teaching opportunities for trainees that expand upon previous placement experience. The monitoring of trainee progress in each lesson observed is undertaken regularly but occasionally limited detail is recorded on how well trainees meet individual or groups of QTS Standards; this, in turn, can impact on how well trainees are able to secure a comprehensive evidence base for their achievements.
39. As part of the good partnership work with schools, visits by university tutors are effective because they support the work of mentors with trainees who may struggle with particular competences. These visits also enable university tutors and mentors to jointly observe teaching and feedback as part of moderation processes and they give all trainers a chance to review the trainees' individual profiles. This has established a good training relationship between the university and partner schools. The care and support for the welfare of trainees is good and trainees praise the high personal investment made in their training by mentors. Communication with schools is seen by many partner schools as a real strength but a few judge this as less frequent than they would like. The inspection team found many examples of good mentoring practice but also identified some instances where judgements about attainment are too generous. The provider has rightly identified the need to secure greater consistency in this aspect across the partnership.
40. The provider evaluates resource needs for each subject strand and the secondary provision as a whole to make certain that the deployment of resources is well matched to the needs of trainees. In particular, a key strength is the flexibility of staff so that university tutors can quickly respond to issues that arise in schools. The expansion of the virtual learning platform, 'Brookes Virtual', is starting to enable trainees to have easier access to lecture notes, to share resources while on school placements and establish discussion forums for educational issues. Trainees are confident in using different types of resources in schools because of good support in centre-based sessions to develop ICT skills. The provider has yet to fully exploit the expertise across the partnership as a resource for sharing and modelling best practice with all mentors and to inform professional studies sessions at the university.
41. The promotion of equality of opportunity and valuing diversity is good. Trainees understand equal opportunities legislation and most show good understanding of preparing to teach diverse groups of students, including students who speak English as an additional language, students who may be socially disadvantaged, and students from a wide range of cultures.

Discussions with trainees reveal that the large majority have the capacity to develop a deeper pedagogical understanding of teaching in multicultural contexts but regular exposure to teaching students of different ethnicities and faiths is lacking in some placements. This limits trainees' ability to transfer knowledge into sustained and consolidated practice. Trainees confirm they have equal access to good resources. There are good levels of support from various university and school-based trainers and careful account is taken of personal circumstances, such as family or other commitments, which are thoughtfully considered in placing trainees. Leaders and the steering committee carefully monitor procedures for any evidence of discrimination or harassment.

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

42. The provider has good capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and appropriately target whole-programme and subject-specific action plans to secure improvement as required. Leaders have established a good shared understanding of the partnership's purpose and an increasing sense of ownership in partnership schools. There is a high level of trust in partners to deliver good quality training. The partnership is increasing its effectiveness through clarifying and monitoring the roles and responsibilities of mentors, professional tutors, and pastoral mentors. The provider effectively supports new mentors who join the partnership. The variability in numbers of mentors attending mentor training means that some do not get the opportunity to explore what constitutes best practice in supporting trainees or to share experience across the partnership. This in turn has a negative effect on the university's capacity to improve.
43. Mentor training at the university is effectively supported by visits from tutors so that mentors have a clear understanding of their role and can implement this appropriately in supporting trainees. The weekly meeting between the mentor and trainee is generally used well to focus on the trainee's subject knowledge and review feedback from lesson observations during the week. Most mentors effectively map trainees' achievement against the QTS Standards but the evidence base against which judgements are triangulated can sometimes be rather sparse and unclear in marrying judgements in the trainee profile to types of evidence that exemplify achievement. As a result, summative judgements do not always give a clear picture of the quality with which the trainees have met the Standards. Some professional tutors do not have a sharp enough picture of the trainees' progress during the school placements and while the overall quality across the partnership is good, the provider has recognised there are still some issues with consistency.
44. The provider has maintained the good focus on tracing trends over time, both in recruitment patterns and in the internal process of predicting final grades as determined at entry. Progress through the programme is less secure and is

reliant on a coming together of various pieces of qualitative evidence to underpin the judgements made. For this reason some judgments about the attainment of trainees' work are more generous than inspection evidence indicates. In some instances data do not always provide a succinct picture of trainees' attainment or progress at different stages of the programme, which can subsequently be interrogated as a measure of the impact of the quality of training and assessment. Even so, inspection evidence supports the view that the large majority of trainees' outcomes are at least good. High levels of employment reflect confidence in the recruitment and selection process and how the provider draws upon course evaluations to set annual targets as a secondary team.

45. The provider has good capacity to anticipate and respond to change at national and local level as a result of a tight focus on key educational agendas that shape curriculum development and initial teacher education. There is a sound focus on helping trainees understand changes in the National Curriculum and 14 to 19 developments and how to integrate ICT skills across the curriculum. Trainees also show good understanding of current safeguarding and child protection legislation. Requirements for initial teacher education are fully met and safeguarding procedures are applied rigorously.
46. Strategic improvement plans draw on the provider's self-evaluation of strengths, areas for development and critical analysis of evaluations from all partners and trainees. There is more scope to draw upon the views of former trainees and their employers to inform programme evaluation and planning. The provider is highly responsive to external examiners' reports and this leads to better outcomes for trainees. The 2009/10 development strategy pinpoints nine key actions for the year and these are well matched to success criteria. While the provider has an awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, grades provided in the self-evaluation document presented prior to inspection were overly generous. A sharper focus on evaluating the impact of programme and partnership work on the progress of trainees is needed by involving all stakeholders in evaluating outcomes for trainees and setting key strategic priorities. The development strategy is not fully understood by all partner schools. Many require additional support to undertake a detailed evaluation of their work in comparison with the training across the partnership.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Context

47. Oxford Brookes University operates in partnership with three further education (FE) colleges to provide in-service training for teachers and trainers from settings across the FE sector. It also provides its own full-time training for pre-service trainees and its own part-time training for in-service trainees, most of whom are employed as teachers in adult and community settings. At the time of the inspection, 90 trainees were enrolled on courses leading to the award of Certificate of Education or to the university-validated awards of postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) or professional graduate certificate in education (Prof. GCE). Both qualifications are endorsed by Standards Verification UK and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers. In addition, post-graduate trainees are able to gain further credits at Masters level.

Key strengths

48. The key strengths are:
- the high attainment of the large majority of trainees
 - the efficient and effective use of resources to enable the large majority of trainees to attain well
 - the good personal support for trainees and the effective promotion of equality and diversity, ensuring that the large majority of trainees attain well regardless of ethnic or social background
 - effective and timely responses by the partnership to innovation and change in the FE sector, resulting in trainees' knowledge and practice being comprehensive and current.

Required actions

49. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the partnership must:
- implement explicit, criterion-referenced and consistent ways of measuring the rate and extent of progress made by trainees throughout the course.
50. In order to strengthen management's capacity to assess performance in order to plan and take actions for improvement the partnership must:
- evaluate more accurately the impact that actions to improve have on the learning experience of trainees, demonstrating their causal relationship at all stages of planning and implementation.

Recommendations

51. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the partnership should:
- undertake more thorough initial assessment, subject and skills audits and base-line grading in order to identify specific training needs, and ensure that early observations take place to inform developmental learning plans
 - improve the synergy between subject mentors, professional tutors in colleges and university teacher trainers so that all those sharing responsibility for trainees' learning contribute to that learning, and to trainees' learning plans, in a more coherent way.
52. In order to improve the consistency of provision the partnership should:
- monitor more directly the contributions to trainees' progress made by subject mentors and professional tutors in each educational or training setting
 - ensure that feedback given to trainees on their teaching, assignments and reflective writing is more consistent in quality and focuses more sharply on subject pedagogy
 - strengthen operational links between partners to promote a more dynamic environment that supports trainees' development.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

53. The university is satisfactory in terms of the outcomes it secures for its trainee teachers. Almost all trainees successfully complete their course and their attainment is good. Attainment is higher for trainees on the full-time pre-service course than for those on the in-service courses. Otherwise, there is no discernible variation between the attainment of any identifiable groups of trainees. Trainees reach their individual level of attainment, however, without a clear understanding of the criteria used to assess it. Furthermore, the profile of attainment grades held by the university for those trainees completing in 2009 was not based on clearly differentiated criteria agreed across the partnership, nor were those grades communicated to trainees. Current trainees are not anticipating being graded when they complete the course, and have only an intuitive notion of their own relative levels of attainment. The university is presently experimenting with the use of a set of differentiated grading criteria for teaching observations, but these are only used by its own training staff and not communicated to mentors or trainees. Inspectors agreed with the university's assessment of attainment for those trainees for whom a mid-year grade had been given, thereby largely confirming the accuracy of the university's judgements of attainment.

54. Trainees plan their lessons and schemes of work well and they structure the learning of their students methodically. They have good subject knowledge and many also possess valuable commercial experience which gives their teaching currency. Personally confident as a result of the good support they receive from their mentors, trainees enjoy a strong rapport with their students and they develop their practical teaching skills well in classrooms, studios and workshops. They use resources creatively and are prepared to experiment with a range of approaches to teaching, taking risks and learning from their experiences. Their questioning skills, however, are less well honed to engage all students in learning at all times, and many do not vary their teaching sufficiently in order to challenge the more able and support the less able. A small minority of trainees intervene too infrequently or too indiscriminately in lessons to correct or guide students when they might most benefit from such direct intervention. Most trainees reflect incisively on their own facility as teachers and this self-critical quality, together with an embracing of the responsibility for their own professional evolution, is highly prized by employers.
55. Recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous, transparent, consistent and fair. All applicants who meet the clear entry criteria, which include good communication skills, are offered a place on the course. The very high rates of successful completion of the course over time and good relevant employment rates for pre-service trainees bear out the effective way in which recruitment procedures contribute to high attainment for the large majority of trainees. The number of trainees from under-represented ethnic groups exceeds the respective proportion of the local population and the regional targets for such recruitment. Recruitment is well matched to identified needs and the intentions of the course. The initial assessment of training needs lacks detail in its audit of subject knowledge and its analysis of personal attributes and skills, with the result that individual training plans are of less value than they might be early in the course. This impedes the progress that trainees might otherwise make.
56. Training and assessment are satisfactory. All trainees with the capability to do so achieve the qualification equipping them to teach. All parties work well together to coordinate the effective placing of trainees in settings from which they might benefit most. Almost all trainees are generously and effectively supported by their mentors in the personal development of their practical subject-teaching skills. The tuition they receive from their teacher trainers engages them well in thinking about the theories that underpin what and how they teach, and in discussing and exploring the different ways in which they might put these theories into practice. The praise and constructive criticism they receive from university teacher trainers and the setting-specific professional tutors who observe their lessons is usually detailed, pragmatic and sensitively framed, with clear learning points for trainees to consider and address; but such feedback is often too late in the course and then too infrequent for trainees to implement the agreed actions in ways that might maximise their potential for progress. Consequently, too many trainees do not make the degree or rate of progress of which they might be capable. Moreover, they lack the means to know just how much progress they are

making because the university has no quantitative measures with which to evaluate the rate or extent of their progress through the course. The consequent lack of aspiration amongst trainees constrains their attainment.

57. Feedback given by subject mentors on trainees' teaching is encouraging and reassuring. Trainees appreciate its frequency and its supportive tone. It too often, however, lacks subject specificity, and it does not always produce clear actions to guide trainees' improvement. These inconsistencies in the effectiveness of mentors' critical advice and guidance are compounded by the lack of supervision or moderation of the work of mentors by the university. Despite the strong professional relationships that are built between almost all trainees and their mentors, and from which trainees derive tangible benefit, too much is left to serendipity. Target setting for trainees is highly variable, with many targets being too vague and mentors' expectations ill defined by the partnership as a whole. Most trainees know what they need to do to become better teachers and they do indeed develop increasingly well as reflective practitioners, but they are set no specific aspirational targets beyond the overall goal of passing the course. Written assignments that have a specific subject focus are not routinely read or commented on by mentors, and so the particulars of subject-specific pedagogy that might arise from such assignments are often not discerned or commented upon. Mentors do not contribute systematically to trainees' learning plans, and most mentors do not even see them or discuss them with their trainees. Consequently, there is a disjunction between the several elements of their training, which curtails the progress that many trainees might make.
58. Resources are well deployed in pursuit of good outcomes for trainees. Imaginative use is made of visiting lecturers to develop specific knowledge and skills. The Westminster Partnership Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT), of which the university is the leading member, promotes a lively research environment and creates good opportunities for trainees to enhance their professional development. The well-equipped and well-promoted library and resources centre at the university is much appreciated and used by trainees.
59. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Trainees understand and practise their responsibility to contribute to social cohesion. There is a wide range of opportunities for most trainees to teach in, or learn directly about, diverse educational settings and to work with staff and students from different backgrounds. In their teaching and in their academic research and analysis, trainees demonstrate a good awareness of, and sensitivity to, the varied needs of their students and how to respond to them. These qualities make a significant contribution to trainees' progress and attainment by equipping them with insight, flexibility and resourcefulness in their teaching.

The capacity for further improvement
and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

60. The university has satisfactory capacity to improve its provision. The partnership is well established and good communications, mutual trust and respect, and shared purposes exist between all partners. Many operational links, however, are less dynamic and so less effective than the good strategic liaison might lead one to expect. In essence, the partners do not know each others' practices well enough to ensure that the achievement and developmental interests of trainees are at the heart of all that the partnership does. The self-assessment report overestimates the positive impact on trainees of many of the actions taken to improve target setting, the use of individual learning plans and the monitoring of trainees' progress. Pre-service trainees and in-service trainees were graded for attainment in 2008/09 against different criteria and standards, and although the university states its intention to grade all trainees' attainment in 2009/10 against the same criteria, inspectors found that this was not being done with sufficient consistency across the partnership. Trainees' progress is evaluated, although not graded, in observed lessons and in their written assignments, but this evaluation is not quantified in any way, preventing any comparisons to be drawn between individuals or institutions and any performance trends to be discerned year by year. It therefore follows that for two of the four indicators of outcomes for trainees, the university has no consistent or valid means of measurement. This severely impairs its capacity to assess its provision against the key criterion of trainees' outcomes. Inspectors did not agree with the majority of the university's grades in its self-assessment, although they did confirm the accuracy of the mid-year grades given for current trainees' attainment.
61. Trainees and their employers contribute regularly and systematically to the evaluation of the provision, and a number of recent improvements are attributable to this reflective discourse. For example, individual learning plans now make explicit reference to the strategies whereby trainees might accomplish their identified improvements. However, much of this good work is undermined by the lack of clarity between the university teacher trainers, the professional tutors in colleges and the subject mentors about how to evaluate the rate or extent of trainees' progress through the course. The university has taken an initiative to offer training to mentors in an attempt to ensure consistency of their contribution, including writing a helpful self-training unit, but it does not know which mentors have completed this training unit or what they have gained from it. Quality assurance of the work of mentors or of professional tutors in colleges is not incisive enough to guarantee a consistently good experience for all trainees across the partnership.
62. University leaders demonstrate a good, flexible capacity to anticipate and respond to change in the FE sector. The strong research environment within the university's education department bears directly upon the good standard of trainees' work in their course module that explores the widening of professional practice. Trainees are prepared in an effective and timely way for current innovations in further education, such as the 14 to 19 Diplomas. They are also equipped to engage in the debate over such issues as the replacement of key skills by functional skills, and what such a change might mean for subject teachers. The content and shape of the course is revised

regularly to reflect national priorities in post-compulsory education and training.

63. The teacher training course is built around a well-developed curriculum that has evolved through research, analysis and productive dialogue with all partners to serve the needs and interests of trainees. However, the university is currently unable to demonstrate strong causal connections between the actions it has taken to improve provision and improved outcomes for trainees. Few data are used to inform self-assessment or guide improvement planning. Key performance indicators are not yet defined or understood commonly across the partnership. The operational links that exist between the university trainers and the partner colleges who do their own training are too weak to ensure that all trainees, wherever they are and however they undertake their course, are receiving an equitable experience.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges.

The Henley College
Milton Keynes College
Swindon College

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

		Primary	Secondary	ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1	2	3
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2	2	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	1	2	3
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	1	2	3
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1	2	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1	2	3
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2	2	2

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Primary	Secondary	ITE for FE
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?		1	2	3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1	2	3
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1	2	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1	2	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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