

# Birmingham City University

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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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. Birmingham City University is a well-established provider of initial teacher education offering programmes leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the primary and secondary age ranges, and training for teachers in post-compulsory education and training. Teacher training is provided within the Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences: in the School of Early Years and Primary Education; and in the School of Secondary and Post-compulsory Education. This arrangement enables good practice to be shared across the three phases: primary education; secondary education; and post-compulsory education and training. The provider works in partnership with schools and colleges across the West Midlands region.

## A commentary on the provision

4. The outcomes for trainees on all routes are generally high and improving, although they are better on the primary and secondary QTS programmes than

on the post-compulsory education and training routes with a higher proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding at the end of their period of training. Recruitment, retention and employment rates on all programmes are well above the national average. Final attainment for trainees on the primary and secondary routes is good and improving, with more than 40% of trainees on both routes judged to be outstanding. Attainment for trainees on the post-compulsory route is also good and improving, with more than three-quarters of trainees attaining at a good or better level. These strong outcomes can be attributed to:

- the strength of the senior management and leadership team
- the strength of the partnerships
- a clear and all-pervasive philosophy of always striving to do better that now permeates middle, as well as senior management, across all phases
- the provider's depth of understanding of the characteristics of good teaching and of effective teacher training, and the way in which this underpins the recruitment of trainees who have the potential to become good teachers as well as the intellectual capacity to cope well with the provider's requirement for them to be critically reflective.

5. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes.

- The provider has a strong local and regional identity. In each of the phases, it identifies and meets local needs very well; recruitment from the local area is strong, retention rates are high and a large proportion of trainees enter into teaching posts in the West Midlands area.
- Trainees in all phases are very well prepared to teach in a diverse society; the provider makes excellent use of the rich diversity in the region.
- All three partnerships are very strong with widespread understanding of the aims and philosophy of the provision.
- The provider has a powerful commitment to working with partners to raise standards.
- The provider pays great attention to the personal well-being of all trainees, alongside their professional development. Trainees in all phases receive excellent levels of personal support. This contributes to high retention rates and other outcomes.
- The attention given to personal support and professional development ensure that there are no significant differences in the achievements of trainees from different groups within each of the phases.

6. There are particularly strong features in some programmes that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision. There is a persuasive narrative that permeates primary and secondary provision: trainees are recruited who are highly suitable for teaching and for the course; the very large majority make at least good progress, wherever they are in the partnership and across all groups, so that they fulfil their potential and attain well. This is not so apparent in post-compulsory provision, although there are signs of

improvement. The following good practice could be more widely disseminated and applied.

- All three phases have developed strategies that are used during selection to determine prospective trainees' potential for teaching; these have not been discussed to share best practice.
- Primary and secondary provision have highly effective systems for modelling best practice, for example, in showing mentors how to provide feedback and set developmental targets for trainees, and for monitoring the quality of provision; these could be used to support on-going developments in the post-compulsory provision.
- There have been significant developments in mentoring in QTS provision to include more coaching, showing trainees 'how to ...', the use of collaborative teaching, and focused observations of other teachers. While there are also good examples of this in the post-compulsory provision, it is not so embedded across the partnership.
- There are interesting developments in the use of formative and summative assessment data to inform course review and self-evaluation; this could be applied across all programmes.

7. The following recommendations should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees across all three phases:

- the use of more structured and formal sharing of good practice across the three phases to ensure that best, and innovative, practice is disseminated to realise the benefits across all of the training programmes.
- fully exploiting the breadth of the partnership across all phases; for example: through collaborative working on 14–19 developments across schools, colleges and work-based settings; and providing trainees with experiences of working with professionals across the children and young people's workforce.

## Provision in the primary phase

### Context

8. There are five primary routes to qualified teacher status (QTS), with currently a total of around 420 trainees: three- and four-year undergraduate BA programmes; full- and part-time post-graduate routes; and an early year's post-graduate route. The partnership includes schools in 14 local authorities across the West Midlands region. The breadth of provision enables the provider to meet well a range of clearly identified needs.

### Key strengths

9. The key strengths are:
- the recruitment of trainees highly suitable for the course and with the potential to become at least good teachers
  - the coherence between the elements of the course to ensure that trainees make at least good progress
  - the very high quality of personal support trainees receive in the university and in schools which contributes to outstanding achievement for all groups of trainees and to the high retention rates
  - the modelling of best practice to ensure consistently high quality mentoring, leading to trainees making at least good progress wherever they are placed in the partnership
  - the culture of continuous improvement and innovative practice, such as the use of the virtual learning environment and the 'virtual school'
  - the basis for improvement planning in rigorous and comprehensive self-evaluation and the clarity of the focus on improving the outcomes for trainees.

### Recommendations

10. In order to increase the proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding at the end of the course, the provider should:
- reduce even further the need for interventions to compensate for variations in the quality of training so that all trainees make at least good progress from the start and throughout the course.

### Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

11. The provider easily meets its recruitment targets on the primary courses and recruits trainees highly suited to the course and with the potential to become at least good teachers. Selection procedures are carefully designed and successfully applied to elicit this potential and trainees' enthusiasm for teaching. Retention rates are well above the national average on both

undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. On the undergraduate programmes, raising the entry requirements has improved retention. All trainees make progress so that final attainment is good, with over 90% of trainees attaining at a good or better level and with more than 40% judged to be outstanding at the end of their course. Trainees in all identifiable groups achieve well with no significant differences. The overwhelming majority of trainees secure employment following the course, well above the national average, and many find teaching posts in the West Midlands region.

12. Trainees' lesson planning is very good, with clear learning objectives and success criteria. Teaching and learning activities are matched well to the expected outcomes, are interactive and motivate learners, and are differentiated well to meet the needs of all learners including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Trainees know their pupils well; they make very good use of assessment information to match planning and teaching to pupils' needs. They use a range of assessment techniques during the lesson and encourage pupils to evaluate their own learning and how it might be improved. Trainees confidently use a range of approaches to teaching and are secure in applying these in different contexts. Trainees evaluate their teaching regularly and use their assessments well to inform their planning. They identify how their teaching can be improved and try to address shortcomings in subsequent lessons. This professional reflection helps them to make at least good progress.
13. The overwhelming majority of trainees make at least good progress to fulfil their potential as a result of training that is consistently of a high quality. The coherence between all of the elements of the course is particularly strong and a key factor in the high achievement of trainees. At all stages, trainees are supported well in making links between central and school-based training, and other aspects of the course, and in applying what they learn to their own teaching. This is enhanced by well-planned directed tasks. In most cases, trainees make strong progress from the start of the course as a result of clear identification of strengths and areas for development. Throughout the course, and during school placements, they receive frequent and good quality feedback and are set clear and focused developmental targets. Personal development tutors have a pivotal role in frequently monitoring trainees' overall progress and they do this very well. There is a good balance of specific feedback on progress against each of the QTS standards and a more holistic overview of trainees' professional development. Trainees also monitor and evaluate their own progress and contribute fully to the setting of their own developmental targets that contribute to their progress and achievement.
14. An example of the strength of the coherence is the link between the development of trainees' subject knowledge and the application of this to their teaching. Subject audits are very well designed to support subject teaching in primary schools and trainees receive excellent guidance and support to ensure that they make good progress in developing and applying their subject knowledge. Feedback is provided through the virtual learning environment and by tutors who address common difficulties in taught sessions and provide one-

to-one support where needed. In this, trainers model very good primary practice. Additionally, the virtual learning environment is used to provide information, to extend opportunities for professional dialogue and to provide case study material to stimulate professional debate. Very well designed assessments, with focused and helpful feedback, also support trainees' development.

15. The quality of training is monitored closely through the impact on trainees' progress and professional development. Regular moderation ensures consistency in the assessment of trainees' progress and attainment. School-based trainers are provided with many models of best practice, for example, in providing feedback and in setting developmental targets for trainees. Visiting tutors regularly undertake observations with mentors and provide joint feedback to the trainee; this is used to model good practice and to provide support and feedback for mentors. Schools are grouped into one of three categories to effectively differentiate the level of support they receive from the university; this ensures that the very large majority of trainees receive consistently good support wherever they are placed in the partnership. On the few occasions where the training falls below the required quality, this is very quickly detected and interventions by tutors and course leaders ensure that trainees do not suffer significantly. This contributes to the good, and often outstanding, achievements and final attainment of trainees and is an example of well-directed use of resources matched to trainees' progress.
16. Trainees have excellent support for their personal well-being in the university and in schools; this contributes to the high retention as well as achievement of trainees. Tutors are very quick to detect when an individual needs additional support and respond extremely well to individual cases. The university also monitors carefully the comparative achievement of different groups of trainees, for example by gender or ethnicity, and has effectively used a range of strategies to ensure that there are no significant differences in achievement.
17. The provider makes very good use of the rich diversity and the resources available across the partnership to ensure that all trainees have a good breadth of experiences and are prepared well to teach in a diverse society. The high quality specialist resources in the university are used well to model best practice in primary classrooms; this prepares trainees well for their school placements. The extremely innovative development of the 'virtual school' to model scenarios which trainees might meet in schools is an excellent tool, and one that could be further developed and applied.

The capacity for further improvement  
and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 1

18. Over the past three years there has been an upward trend in the proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding at the end of the course. The provider has also been successful in improving retention to a point where it is well above the



national average. It has done this while keeping the proportion of trainees judged to be satisfactory, consistently below 10%. Employment rates have also been consistently high and well above the national average. The provider has been successful in maintaining the high quality that was evident at the time of the previous inspection, and in securing significant improvements in trainees' final attainment.

19. A key factor in sustaining high quality outcomes and securing the trend of improvement is the rigorous, accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation; this is very clearly focused on the rigorous analysis of data about the outcomes for trainees and identifying cause and effect. This high quality is clear at all levels: individual modules; school-based components; for each programme; and across all of the primary provision. Information is gathered from a wide range of internal and external sources, including canvassing the views of former trainees and their schools. Each aspect of the course is carefully evaluated. The whole partnership is fully involved in this self-review and evaluation and is well-informed of the outcomes. Trainees' and school-based trainers' views are gathered and carefully triangulated with information from other sources, such as external examiners' reports. The views of trainees are an important component of course reviews and are based on written evaluations, group discussions and through active participation by course representatives.
20. Schools are expected to, and do, undertake evaluations of the quality of their provision; these are compared with trainees' and link tutors' evaluations of the quality of school placements. This is used well to determine the level of support provided for each school in the partnership. This is a significant factor in sustaining high quality across the partnership and is effective in ensuring appropriate and consistent levels of support for trainees wherever they are placed in the partnership. This is enhanced by very good training for new school-based tutors. However, the evaluations undertaken by schools often lack a focus on the analysis of the achievements of trainees.
21. Self-evaluation also incorporates thorough on-going course review; this enables the provider to be fully prepared for, and able to respond to, internal and external drivers for change. The provider is fully aware of, for example, the changes required as a result of the review of the primary curriculum and developments in the teaching of early reading and primary mathematics. The impact of changes is assessed through how well trainees can apply it to their teaching. Tutors are active in national and local initiatives; this enables them to anticipate changes and respond knowledgeably. The quality of the whole partnership response to these changes is impressive and reinforces the strength of the partnership. The provider also uses the expertise within the partnership well; for example: partnership schools have supported trainees in the use of 'assessing pupil progress' materials; and the use of leading literacy schools to host visits for groups of trainees to learn about teaching of early reading and phonics. Another example is the involvement of the partnership in the redesign of the undergraduate BA course; the views of past and current trainees and partner schools were used well to inform decisions about the

structure and content of the programme. This involvement of the partnership strengthens the provider's capacity to secure and sustain improvement.

22. Recent changes have sharpened the procedures for the assessment of trainees in response to review and to feedback from schools and trainees; for example, in English, smaller elements assessed more frequently provide trainees with sharper feedback on their progress at an earlier stage in their training. Changes to the pen portraits used to assess trainees' achievements during school placements are clearly explained in course documentation, and fully understood and applied consistently across the partnership; this supports trainees' progress through more accurate and precise feedback and sharper development targets.
23. Self-evaluation directly informs improvement planning that is sharp, incisive and clearly targeted at improving the outcomes for trainees. This high quality planning is undertaken for all aspects of the partnership and provision and at all levels. Across the partnership, all trainers are clear about the priorities for improvement and about their role in securing these. The leadership and management at all levels, in the university and across the partnership, have outstanding capacity to sustain high-quality outcomes and to secure and sustain improvement where this is required.

## Provision in the secondary phase

### Context

24. Birmingham City University offers a one-year full-time professional graduate and post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) leading to the award of qualified teacher status (QTS). Training is provided in five secondary subjects: art and design; design and technology (food and textiles); drama; mathematics; and music. A two-year part-time programme is also available in music. The provider also offers enhancement in two diploma strands: creative and media; and hospitality. All trainees are trained to teach across the 11–16 age range with post-16 enhancement. Trainees can choose to undertake masters level credits through level seven modules to be awarded a post-graduate certificate. At the time of the inspection there were 168 trainees on the secondary programme. The majority of partnership schools are located in the West Midlands area, but the partnership also stretches across nine other local authorities.

### Key strengths

25. The key strengths are:
- rigorous selection that results in the recruitment of trainees who are well suited to the training programme and fully committed to teaching
  - the well-structured, highly coherent programme with high levels of consistency across the partnership
  - high quality monitoring and evaluation that leads to continuous improvement to raise the quality of outcomes for all trainees
  - the very close monitoring of all aspects of trainees' professional development to ensure their progress
  - a high quality personalised action plan to ensure trainees' progress from the start of the course
  - the attention given to trainees' personal well-being and the quality of the 'wrap-around' support they receive
  - trainees' outstanding ability to critically evaluate their own work to secure their own progress.

### Recommendations

26. In order to improve the proportion of trainees whose attainment is judged as outstanding and secure better progress for the small minority judged to be satisfactory at the end of the training, the provider should:
- embed the highest quality of mentoring across the partnership so that feedback to trainees and the setting of sharp developmental targets ensure that all make progress to fulfil their potential.

## Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

27. Trainees' attainment by the end of the programme is good overall, with more than 40% of trainees judged to be outstanding. Over the past three years, an increasing number of trainees made good or better progress to fulfil their potential. All groups of trainees make comparable progress with no significant differences in achievement. These good outcomes are the result of training that is highly cohesive and personalised for every trainee and the very high levels of personal support for all trainees. Key features are the judicious use of pre-course and individual action plans to target subject knowledge enhancement and application, outstanding training and assessment across the partnership, and trainees' ability to be highly reflective and contribute well to their own progress. Recruitment of trainees is through a rigorous selection process with careful consideration of candidates' potential as a teacher and their intellectual capacity to cope with the demands of the course. The provider attracts a significant number of applicants for each available place and has consistently met or exceeded its recruitment targets. Retention and employment rates are well above national averages, with many trainees finding teaching posts in the West Midlands region. Rigorous and thorough recruitment and selection processes, coupled with high quality training and assessment, leads to the progression of trainees through the initial teacher training to employment and into leadership responsibility in partnership schools as mentors and professional mentors.
28. Trainees are extremely conscientious and impressively professional in their attitudes. They approach their training with commitment and energy because they know tutors at university and in schools are offering the very best support to help them succeed in meeting the QTS standards and prepare for entry to the profession. Trainees make outstanding progress from the start of the course because they fully understand how the constituent parts of the programme combine. A resounding success of the coherence of the programme is trainees' ability to evaluate their work in schools and return to centre-based sessions with a clear vision of how to adjust their learning and teaching to 'do better next time'. They firmly understand the importance of this iterative process to their progress as a teacher. The large majority of trainees can evaluate their own teaching to determine how much progress pupils make in their lessons. This is an emerging strength and shows the impact of actions taken by leaders to refocus trainees' evaluations on learning rather than just teaching methods.
29. Trainees are highly articulate in discussing how their planning affects learning. They comprehensively review the impact of different teaching strategies with various pupil groups. Trainees' ability to describe how to successfully differentiate learning to match pupils' needs is good and most trainees use this well in their planning and teaching. A few are still getting to grips with planning learning that challenges the most able pupils whilst supporting the less able. Although this has yet to come to fruition in their practice, they can quickly assimilate how theory can be used to inform teaching strategies. In a small

minority of cases, trainees' understanding of pedagogy is less secure. These trainees need clearer targets to improve their practice, in moving from good to outstanding attainment.

30. A particular strength in the selection process is how the outcomes from interviews inform both pre-course and subsequent individual action plans. The pre-course tasks are tightly focused on the development of subject and professional knowledge. Trainees speak eloquently about how these act as a springboard for further study throughout the programme and lead to progress from the start of the course. The individual action plans are used exceptionally well to enhance trainees' subject knowledge and application because they are personalised to the needs of each trainee. Trainees relish a range of opportunities to enhance and apply their subject knowledge through action learning groups and peer mentoring where a novice/expert relationship, such as in drama workshops, helps them feel confident with new subject knowledge and how to apply this to their teaching. Trainees are fully involved in developing and monitoring their action plans. The close monitoring of trainees' development by university tutors and mentors ensures that they progress well.
31. The exceptional coherence of the constituent parts of the programme supports the outstanding progress many trainees make. In each of the five subject strands, trainees have access to high quality resources and equipment in the university that fully support their teaching. This gives trainees increased confidence in using different kinds of resources in their teaching. A significant feature of university sessions is taking generic themes such as behaviour management and learning for those pupils who speak English as an additional language, and then developing these themes further through subject-specific sessions. This helps trainees make rapid progress in their planning. The outstanding progress made by many trainees is based on how they bring together knowledge from university sessions, practical experience in the classroom, feedback from trainers and their own professional evaluation. The transition between school placements is very well managed. Targets arising from the first placement are carefully moderated and refined through individual interviews with personal development tutors. Trainees are confident that mentors for final school placements have a clear view of their strengths and areas for development. Trainees say this reassures them that nothing slips through the net about their personal well-being or their achievement against the QTS standards.
32. The quality of training across the partnership is outstanding because roles and expectations are exceptionally clear, all schools are highly committed to a vision of excellence in teacher education and because the university very carefully monitors the quality of school-based training through its impact on trainees' progress. In the true sense of collaborative working trainees receive wrap-around care, guidance and support that come from a union of partners. On the few occasions where the quality falls below that expected, for example in the quality of feedback and in developmental targets that are too imprecise, this is quickly detected and interventions ensure that these trainees are not significantly affected. Through this, all trainees have equal access to high

quality training. Trainees are passionate about visits from university staff complementing regular communication through email and virtual discussion forums. Trainees say that levels of support for their welfare, personal circumstances and effective policies which militate against discrimination, mean they feel valued as individuals and leads directly to the high quality of trainees' achievements.

33. Assessment processes are systematic and thorough; trainees have a good understanding of how they are assessed and why. Assessment provides a good balance of feedback on progress against the QTS standards and a more holistic view of the trainee's overall professional development. Mentors carefully assess the progress trainees make against QTS standards by targeting particular standards in lesson observations. They provide trainees with clear targets in each weekly review and mid- and end-of-placement assessments. The careful tracking of progress means all trainers have a clear picture of each trainee. Joint observations, undertaken by visiting tutors with mentors, are used well to ensure accurate judgements of trainees' achievements, as well as modelling best practice, for example in giving feedback and setting developmental targets. Interventions by university tutors to support mentors with some trainees lead to sharper target setting to help the trainee make at least satisfactory progress. The provider rightly accepts that, on occasion, university tutors may intervene more frequently in some schools to improve the quality of mentoring, but do so with sensitivity that supports the professional development of mentors.
34. Trainees' understanding of equality and diversity issues is outstanding for two reasons; the provider selects school placements for each trainee that provide them with good experiences of working with pupils from different ethnicities and backgrounds; and the demography of the schools, combined with exceptionally focused central training, ensures trainees have significant classroom experience to put into practice what they have learnt about teaching in culturally diverse contexts. Their achievement in teaching pupils from a wide range of cultural and other diversity is praised by mentors and induction tutors.

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

Grade: 1

35. The leadership and management of the training programme and the partnership demonstrate outstanding capacity for further improvement and in sustaining high quality outcomes for trainees. There is a trend of improvement in trainees' attainment, particularly in the proportion judged to be outstanding; retention and employment rates have been consistently high and well above national averages. This can be attributed to rigorous, accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation, focused on the analysis of the outcomes for trainees, that is used to drive and sustain improvements. There is no room for complacency and leaders continually review how to reach and sustain excellence. The high standards set by all leaders provide an ambitious vision

for the programme and are aspirational for both trainees and personnel in the schools. The vision to consistently achieve excellence underpins the monitoring and evaluation of training linked to outcomes for all trainees.

36. Senior and middle leaders are highly reflective and evaluate all aspects of the provision. They carefully assess performance data to determine how best to improve outcomes for all trainees and regularly undertake detailed scrutiny of the views of current and former trainees, mentors, professional mentors and employers to inform changes to the programme. The views of stakeholders both reinforce the judgements made in the provider's self-evaluation and illuminate the overwhelmingly positive views of the programme.
37. The university monitors closely all aspects of the provision to maintain its high quality. Leaders maintain regular and thorough communication with partnership schools so that all mentors and professional mentors have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility. Coupled with quality assurance visits to schools, this regular communication helps university tutors carefully track the progress of each trainee. The quality assurance and training visits made by university tutors always include joint observations with mentors and discussions about the welfare and progress of each trainee. The impact of rigorous quality assurance monitoring is evident in the high quality of training across the partnership. This means there is equality of opportunity for all trainees and enables university tutors to offer support to mentors and professional tutors tailored to individual needs. The embedded systems of assessing trainees and assuring quality across the partnership are the bedrock of the programme resulting in high quality outcomes for trainees. Increasingly, trainee assessment data is used as part of course review. These outstanding features of the programme are further verified by external examiners.
38. Mentors are fully involved in many aspects of the course, reinforcing the strength of the partnership and its capacity to sustain high quality outcomes. For example, mentors' experience is used well in assessing the suitability of candidates through interview panels. Mentors value this opportunity to contribute to the selection of trainees whom they judge to have the potential to flourish in their schools and as members of the teaching profession.
39. Leaders are highly responsive to national educational initiatives which influence the content of the training programme and ensure that all trainees develop a good understanding of whole-school issues which shape their role as a practising teacher. The centre-based sessions have impressively supported trainees' understanding of changes to the secondary curriculum, the 14–19 curriculum pathways, and the focus upon the health and well-being of every child. Trainees' current work and discussions with former trainees, as part of the inspection, show deep understanding of national initiatives borne out of sessions at the university layered with first-hand experience from school placements. Mentors and induction tutors for newly qualified teachers confirm that trainees have a good and often outstanding knowledge of national agendas.

40. Developing trainees' subject knowledge for teaching has been given an intensive focus in recent years. The university has been adept in using trainee expertise through action learning groups and a forum on the virtual learning environment to give trainees the chance to learn from one another as well as drawing on the expertise of teaching staff. Subject leaders are experts in their own fields and the local and national connections they have further support the exploration of best practice during university-based sessions. Trainees are highly appreciative of being able to explore creative ideas with tutors and revisit these to plan learning during their school placements. The provider has established a culture of critical reflection which permeates the entire programme.
41. Improvement planning is grounded in self-evaluation, evidence from individual subject evaluations, external examiners' reports and evaluations from each school placement. Stringent monitoring and evaluation of the quality of outcomes for trainees leads to action plans which are tightly focused on realistic and measurable targets both for the secondary provision as a whole and for each of the five subject routes. This thorough process contributes to high retention, outstanding training in a very cohesive partnership and the outstanding progress and achievements of the large majority of trainees.
42. The annual programme review and subsequent subject action plans are shared with partnership schools who confirm they have a good understanding of why changes are made and how these affect their roles in working with the trainees. The voice of the partnership has good representation through the partnership committee and the board of studies whose decision making always considers what is best for trainees. Schools understand the annual targets and acknowledge how their partnership roles influence changes to the programme. The large majority of schools evaluate the training they offer but a few have yet to make this a formal rather than informal process.



## Initial teacher education for the further education system

### Context

43. Birmingham City University works in partnership with two other institutions in Birmingham to provide initial teacher education for teachers and trainers in the further education system. Courses lead to the university's professional and post-graduate certificates in education (PGCE) and the diploma in professional studies (DPS). These qualifications relate to post-compulsory education and training. They meet the statutory requirements and are endorsed by Standards Verification UK. The PGCE course is offered at the university as full-time and part-time pre-service and in-service provision, whereas the DPS is offered across the partnership as a part-time, mainly in-service programme. This course had its final intake in January 2010.
44. Currently, 207 trainees follow these courses, of which 118 are in-service. Approximately 47% of trainees are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 61% are female.

### Key strengths

45. The key strengths are:
- the very good pastoral and academic support systems which help trainees to make good progress
  - the very effective response to meeting local needs, including those of people under-represented in teacher education
  - the exemplary use of information learning technology and the virtual learning environment which aid trainees' learning and inform their teaching practice
  - how well trainees' promote equality and value diversity in their teaching, as a result of good training.

### Required actions

46. In order to improve outcomes for trainees, the partnership must:
- increase the extent and the rigour of monitoring so that the consistency and the quality of trainees' experiences improve
  - ensure that all mentors receive effective training in mentoring and in lesson observation skills, so that all trainees benefit from the excellent mentoring practice exhibited by some mentors.

### Recommendations

47. In order to improve its capacity to improve, the partnership should:

- develop the accuracy, validity and inclusiveness of the self-evaluation process, so that clear evidence of the impact of actions supports judgements.
48. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- ensure that placements provide a wide range of teaching experience to prepare trainees for the diverse challenges of teaching in the lifelong learning sector
  - make target setting more specific and formative so that each trainee knows how best to improve her/his teaching skills and written work
  - increase the consistency and rigour of the recruitment and selection processes so that initial actions and support to aid progress are implemented
  - increase the monitoring and quality of training sessions so that trainees experience at least good practice in all sessions
  - develop the recently introduced individual learning plans so that they become the key focus of trainees' improvement strategies.
49. In order to improve the quality of the provision, the partnership should:
- share good practice within the partnership and across the phases so that all trainees benefit from high quality provision.

## Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

50. The overall effectiveness of the partnership in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is satisfactory. Trainees' attainments by different groups, courses and sites are good. Just more than 75% of trainees attain at a good or better level by the end of their course. Previous areas of concern regarding the lower attainment of male trainees and of female trainees from Asian backgrounds are being addressed. Retention and success rates have improved significantly over three years and most are high. The progression rate between the first and second years of the DPS course is high. The university has reviewed and improved its data collection processes, so that the destination of most leavers is known. Progression into relevant posts is high. Trainers make mainly accurate judgements of the achievement of existing trainees and most predicted attainment grades are realistic. Nevertheless, managers are aware of the continuing need to improve the consistency and the validity of judgements about trainees' achievement and attainment. Most trainees make good progress and attain well because of the good pastoral, personal and academic support they receive from trainers, professional development tutors and mentors. They also benefit from the very effective use of interactive learning resources. Other trainees do not make such good progress, because of the variability in the quality of training and mentoring.
51. Trainees demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and skills. Most are aware of the current issues in the lifelong learning sector, including equality and diversity, but a few lack understanding of the Every Child Matters themes and

how best to support their learners' literacy and numeracy needs. Most in-service trainees have a broad and suitable range of teaching experience and are involved appropriately in the wider aspects of further education and training. A minority of pre-service trainees, however, have a narrow teaching experience, which does not prepare them fully to teach in the very diverse lifelong learning sector.

52. The range of trainees' academic qualifications and teaching experience when they join the provision is very wide. Nevertheless, the majority of trainees make good progress during the courses, as evidenced by their lesson observation outcomes, assignment feedback and the quality of their self-reflection. Most trainees know what they need to do to improve, but the developmental targets they set are often too general. Trainees work hard to improve their teaching based on the feedback from their previous lesson observation and their self-reflection. Many trainees relate theory well to practice and use their experiences to provide relevant examples for their learners. Most trainees plan their lessons carefully and include differentiation strategies, although these are not always implemented in practice. Trainees use information and learning technology appropriately to aid learners' understanding. Most trainees manage their lessons well, but occasionally talk too much, even when their learners are working in small groups. Other trainees have developed their skills such that they allow their learners to progress, and intervene only when necessary.
53. Recruitment and selection arrangements are satisfactory. The partnership recruits trainees from under-represented groups very successfully. It targets its marketing to attract women from minority ethnic backgrounds and males with vocational qualifications. The provider did not, however, meet its recruitment targets in 2009/10. When trainees' needs are diagnosed at interview, trainees receive prompt and helpful support and attain as well as their peers. The liaison with the academic skills centre helps trainees to progress and to aspire to higher standards. A minority of trainees do not progress as well as expected in the early part of their course. The systematic initial diagnosis of individual trainees' literacy, language, dyslexia and numeracy needs is underdeveloped. Many trainees do not receive feedback on their pre-interview assignments. They welcome the advice to observe teaching in a lifelong learning setting. Trainers are aware of individual trainee's needs following the interview process, but these do not inform the individual learning plan. The use of these plans to inform trainees of their progress and targets is not yet fully developed. The provider carries out relevant safeguarding checks on new trainees. Managers judge correctly that they should review entry standards, increase the rigour of the interview process and identify teaching practice placements earlier.
54. Training and assessment are satisfactory. In the best training sessions, trainees benefit greatly from interesting and informative delivery, good encouragement and engagement in a wide range of useful learning activities. They progress well with their knowledge and understanding. The training models good practice and enables trainees to practise in their own lessons what they have experienced. In the less effective sessions, the trainer dominates; trainees are

passive receptors of trainers' knowledge and are not fully involved in the proceedings. Specialist workshops and external speakers, however, provide good training and development for many trainees. Most mentors are excellent, know their subject well and show their trainees ways to teach it to best effect in different settings. Their lesson observation feedbacks are detailed and are very pertinent to their trainees, their learners and the settings. They are committed to improving their trainees' subject-specialist teaching skills. A few mentors are much less involved. Their specialisms differ from their trainees' specialisms. Their lesson observation reports contain very generalised comments which do not focus on the individual trainee's development needs. They have not had recent mentor training, nor do they meet with other mentors to share best practice. Trainees improve their subject specialist teaching skills and ideas through peer support, critical friend observations, virtual learning environment forums and action learning sets. Trainers, many mentors and personal development tutors give willingly of their own time to help trainees in many ways and support them. Most trainees' targets are unique to the individual trainee and really help the trainee to progress rapidly; they are key to improving each trainee's skills and performance. A minority of trainees have targets which are too operational and general and do not advise how a trainee might improve.

55. Resources are good. Most trainers populate the virtual learning environment extensively and effectively to aid trainees' progress. They use it to facilitate effective communication and ensure all trainees have equal access to all course materials, guidance and administrative details. Increasingly, trainees are using the virtual learning environment to develop themes, resolve queries and support each other. The allocation of funding to resources is very effective in aiding trainees to progress and attain well. A minority of trainees and mentors do not receive remission to enable them to allocate time to their training or mentoring. They consider that this limits the quality of their input. Trainers and trainees are encouraged to pursue staff development opportunities which are many, varied and relevant.
56. The quality of the provision across the partnership is satisfactory. Whilst many aspects are good, the less effective provision affects a few trainees adversely. Recent leadership and management changes are beginning to lead to improvements, but these are yet to be embedded fully across all areas. The quality assurance of assignment marking is robust. A substantial sample of trainees' work, and all failed work, are double marked and moderation is thorough. Personal development tutors moderate mentors' first and last observations of trainees' lessons effectively, but, in some cases, insufficient liaison occurs otherwise. Processes to judge the effectiveness of training sessions are not robust. Although new trainers are observed by colleagues and peer observation exists, there is no systematic process to assure the quality of training. Former trainees, although mostly very satisfied with their training experiences, refer to the variable quality of the provision. Trainees give constructive feedback at the end of each module and their contributions are welcomed and disseminated among trainers. Trainee representatives attend

partnership meetings and suggest improvements. Cross-partnership liaison is good; communication is very effective.

57. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity are embedded in modules and through assessment. Trainers show good practice in treating each trainee equitably, including trainees with mental health concerns and those with Asperger's syndrome. The provider encourages applicants to disclose specific needs. Ground rules of respect for one another are agreed early in the course. Most importantly, trainees demonstrate good awareness and sensitivity when teaching topics which may be controversial. Lesson plans encourage the consideration of individual needs, but planning for cultural awareness, which is strong in some subject areas such as art, is not assessed specifically through lesson observations.

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

Grade: 3

58. The partnership has a satisfactory capacity to sustain high quality outcomes for trainees and to secure improvements. The outcomes from the self-evaluation process are open and honest and judge trainees' attainment by different groups thoroughly. Managers know most of the provision's main strengths and areas for improvement, but do not express them clearly with supporting evidence in their self-evaluation. Self-evaluation outcomes state what is available to trainers, trainees and mentors to improve provision, but not what the uptake is or the impact of actions taken. The outcomes are too descriptive and lack evaluative judgements. The self-evaluation process involves staff and trainees via module evaluations and review meetings, but there is little evidence of any input from placement providers or mentors. The self-evaluation contains little information about the provider's capacity to improve. While the judgements about trainees' attainments and most aspects of the provision are accurate, the self-assessed grades for quality of provision, capacity to improve, self-evaluation and action planning are higher than those awarded by inspectors. The annual reviews are detailed, but monitoring at course level of the quality of placements, range of trainees' teaching experience and mentoring is not yet sufficiently systematic. Trainees receive varying quality experiences due to the inconsistencies in the provision; weaknesses in monitoring mean that this is not always detected to enable managers to intervene swiftly and effectively.
59. The provider has good ability to anticipate change and prepare for, and respond to, national and local initiatives. After much careful consideration, managers decided to withdraw from the DPS course and to introduce part-time PGCE provision. This decision represents good planning in response to anticipated national funding restrictions and concerns about duplicating local provision. The university works closely and effectively with its partners who value the relationship. This provision is very much a partnership of local collaborators. The university is not remote; it is very much involved with the provision, wherever it occurs. It has identified development priorities such as

the introduction of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision with one partner and also training 'People Serve' mentors in the workplace. The university develops initiatives to meet local demand through the 'Greater Birmingham Scheme'. It has researched skills shortages and presented the findings recently to a parliamentary select committee. It makes professional development opportunities available to staff in colleges, prisons and work-based learning settings.

60. The effectiveness of the provider in planning and taking action for improvement is satisfactory. The self-evaluation outcomes inform the action plan, as does the programme annual review, but data on the outcomes for trainees are not yet used fully to improve provision. The action plan is reviewed frequently and the most recent one is much more detailed and comprehensive than the previous version. All three partners consider and develop the action plan in the partnership committee and are aware of what is needed to improve the quality of trainees' experiences. The impact of the action plan is evident in improving recruitment and selection processes for the September 2010 intake, but is less evident in improving training and assessment. Managers were initially slow to address some of the actions from the last inspection. Key areas for improvement such as the variable quality of training sessions and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching practice placements are still evident. The overall effectiveness is still satisfactory. The revised management structure is already having an impact on addressing areas of concern more effectively and in increasing the monitoring of provision. Although existing good practice in each of the two courses is now being shared, the sharing of good practice across phases is insufficient. The monitoring of the quality of mentoring, teaching practice experience, trainee, mentor and personal development tutor liaison and trainees' targets is underdeveloped.

## Annex: Partnership colleges

62. The partnership includes the following:

- South Birmingham College
- The Brasshouse Language Centre, Birmingham.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

### Overall effectiveness

		Primary	Secondary	ITE for FE
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1	1	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	1	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	1	3
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1	1	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1	1	3
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	1	1	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	1	3
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?	1	1	3
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?	1	1	2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?	1	1	3

<sup>1</sup> The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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