

Forest Independent Primary Collegiate

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Limes Avenue Chigwell Essex IG7 5LP
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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. Forest Independent Primary Collegiate is a partnership of 20 primary schools in Essex and the London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Enfield. It was accredited to provide school centred initial teacher training in 2000. It offers a one-year full-time primary course leading to the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) awarded by Middlesex University. Since 2003 the Collegiate has also provided places for trainees to gain QTS by an employment based route through the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The partnership has close links with nine special schools and secondary schools which offer short placements. Two years ago, the Collegiate moved to its current central base on the site of two partnership schools. Another partnership school is the nominated lead school. The Collegiate has a full-time manager and administrative assistant; the management committee is chaired by a headteacher of a partnership school and oversees the management of the PGCE course and the GTP programme.

The Collegiate's capacity to improve is therefore reported jointly following reports on the overall effectiveness of each route.

A commentary on the provision

4. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes:
 - the continuing strong commitment of the partnership to initial teacher education
 - proven success in 'growing its own trainees': trainees gain and remain in employment locally, often in partnership schools, obtain posts of responsibility and contribute to the provision of initial teacher education
 - the selection of trainees who are determined, enthusiastic and who have the potential to be extremely good teachers
 - the strong focus on the management of behaviour including the ongoing compilation by trainees of highly reflective behaviour journals.

5. There is a particularly strong feature in the GTP programme that could be applied to the PGCE provision:
 - the mentors' communication book.

6. The following recommendations should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees:
 - ensure that targets agreed by mentors, tutors and trainees identify exactly what trainees need to do to improve their practice
 - enrich the training for mentors to ensure that all are skilled in helping trainees to lift their performance
 - sharpen improvement planning by interrogating the data more rigorously to identify precise aspects for improvement, and by linking actions to specific outcomes for trainees.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

7. At the time of the inspection there were 25 trainees on the school centred initial teacher training course which prepares them to teach pupils between the ages of 5 and 11. Trainees undertake three assessed placements in mainstream schools and a two week placement in a special school. Usually in June, successful applicants meet the tutors, headteachers and mentors from all partnership schools.

Key strengths

8. The key strengths are:
 - an established, close knit partnership with many former trainees now acting as mentors
 - a well structured academic and practical course with an effective focus on understanding how to manage pupils' behaviour
 - the good range of contrasting placements which prepares trainees well to teach in a diverse community
 - the two week placement in a special school which is a powerful stimulus for many trainees in positively influencing their subsequent practice
 - the development of trainees as confident and reflective practitioners willing to take risks in their teaching.

Recommendations

9. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
 - ensure that all trainees gain practical experience of teaching reading and science
 - within its assessment procedures review the weighting and aggregation of elements of trainees' performance to more accurately reflect the quality of trainees' classroom practice.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

10. The provision is good, with some aspects, particularly the selection process, the use of resources and the promotion of equality and diversity, of outstanding quality. Improvements in the training since the last inspection have resulted in a rising trend of trainees being judged to be outstanding, but inconsistencies in training and assessment, and in the quality of the provision across the partnership, are hindering some trainees in fulfilling their potential.
11. Over the last three years, trainees' attainment has risen with a trend towards half of each cohort being graded outstanding. Trainees are very positive about the training and take pride in their achievement. They describe the course as

'very challenging'. They know from the outset that much is expected of them but also point to the high level of personal support and encouragement from the course manager, administrator, tutors and mentors. The Collegiate has a strong record of 100% course completion and entry into teaching. In line with this pattern all 25 trainees have stayed the course and most, at the time of the inspection, had already gained teaching posts, often in partnership schools. Headteachers refer to trainees being 'heads above' applicants from other providers in their confidence and knowledge about teaching. As a result, the partnership now has many schools with a significant number of former trainees some of whom are using their knowledge and expertise to mentor current trainees.

12. Trainees make good progress overall: some make outstanding progress and excel in meeting the Standards in the classroom as well as performing at a high academic level in the writing they do for assignments. A common strength lies in the trainees' good professional attributes. Trainees show a high level of personal commitment and responsibility, are generally extremely well organised and work well as part of a team. They also show a mature ability to reflect critically on their practice and a ready willingness to seek and act on advice. Observations of trainees' teaching showed a developing flair and confidence to try something new. Trainees plan lessons in detail, pay good attention to practical experiences, and make supporting resources, frequently incorporating information and communication technology. They have a good range of strategies to manage pupils' behaviour which, as discussions showed, are rooted in an understanding of key educational theory and child development.
13. Outstanding recruitment and selection procedures underpin the effectiveness of the course. The comprehensive website, the partnership's good reputation and word of mouth result in a high demand for places. Rigorous panel interviews, as well as reports from time spent in schools, selection tasks in English and mathematics, and short presentations, are used well to identify trainees with the personal skills and potential not only to be effective teachers but also to meet the academic demands of the PGCE course. As a result some progress to a Master's degree. The partnership is successful in recruiting males and trainees from minority ethnic groups, from a wide span of ages and with a wide range of subjects of first degrees and previous experience with children.
14. Trainees make good progress academically and professionally because of the overall good quality of the training at the centre and in the schools. The course has good structure and progression with taught elements at the centre preparing for, and building on, trainees' experience in schools. There is a strong focus on inclusion, English as an additional language and how schools promote the strands of Every Child Matters. Placements in four schools give trainees beneficial experience of a range of social and ethnic contexts, and patterns of school and curriculum organisation. The placement in a special school is highly valued by trainees. It gives them a different perspective on what has gone before: some referred to it being 'eye opening' and key to helping them to appreciate pupils' differing needs and how to meet them. Entries in trainees' behaviour journals show that trainees reflect critically on this experience. The behaviour journal is an impressive record of each trainee's

journey over the year in reflecting on and understanding aspects of pupils' behaviour, often with reference to research and reading.

15. Trainees are highly satisfied with the training at the centre as tutors model effective classroom practice: in mathematics sessions, for example, trainees undertake a mental and oral starter and build up a useful collection of ideas to use in school. 'Brilliant contagious enthusiasm' was one trainee's view of the centre based science training. However, the opportunity for some trainees to practise science teaching during placements is quite limited. Similarly, sessions at the centre give trainees a sound overview of the theory of the teaching of reading but some trainees have very limited opportunity in schools to apply their knowledge and to try out practical ideas, especially in the teaching of phonics. Headteachers, mentors and tutors have already agreed changes to the course to ensure the next cohort of trainees all experience teaching science and early reading. Over the year, trainees undertake a considerable number of assignments, tasks and formal tests which link theory and practice. Some work is worthy of wider publication. Prime examples are presentations on ethnic, cultural and language considerations in teaching in Essex, and on cross curricular planning.
16. The overall quality of mentoring in school is good; there is some high quality mentoring and coaching but also some inconsistencies especially in the quality of the targets to help trainees progress. Mentors are accurate in judging the quality of trainees' teaching and often give astute oral feedback. They encourage and engage trainees in professional dialogue, offering helpful, practical points for improvement. Occasionally, the focus on general teaching skills limits the discussion about the subject content and how the trainees can strengthen pupils' learning. While some targets are sharply focused, especially in the final placement, others do not indicate well enough what trainees need to do to make an immediate difference to their teaching. The handbook for mentors gives a clear weekly overview of the focus in training as well as guidance on the processes of mentoring and evaluating trainees' progress which have also been discussed at termly meetings for mentors. Not all mentors, however, are equally skilled in applying the guidance. This results in inconsistencies across the partnership, especially in how mentors help trainees to improve their teaching overall.
17. The progression of trainees' academic and professional development is tracked continuously. Open communication between schools and the centre ensures that support and guidance are readily available and issues can be resolved quickly. Partnership schools show a high degree of goodwill in offering placements to meet individual needs and in providing considerable support for trainees whose progress wavers. All aspects of school and centre based training are matched against the Standards. However, the weighting and aggregation of judgements can place too much emphasis on academic achievement and inflate the summative judgement for trainees who are weaker in classroom practice although they meet the Standards.

18. The Collegiate makes outstanding use of the specialist expertise of the course manager; her input regarding the management of behaviour, understanding and meeting pupils' needs, is an influential element in the course. She knows the partnership schools extremely well and has also established strong links with special schools and a secondary training school. This enables trainees to experience in situ, training in the use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning tool, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and provision in Key Stage 3. While trainees and trainers accept that the current base accommodation is cramped, this has not limited the delivery of the centre based training unduly. Work is ready to start on an extension.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Context

19. The Collegiate offers 12 places for trainees to gain QTS through the Graduate Teacher Programme. Currently 11 trainees are employed in primary schools which are either well established members of the partnership or are part of a satellite partnership group of schools.

Key strengths

20. The key strengths are:
- the mentors' communication book which gives a detailed record of support and its impact
 - the conscientious and high quality tutoring
 - good quality mentoring and support for trainees from all staff in partnership schools
 - assignments which are firmly rooted in school experience and which challenge and develop trainees' understanding of classroom practice.

Recommendations

21. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- ensure the training entry profile is reviewed to identify specific targets and key experiences for the second placement.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

22. The high quality outcomes for trainees reflect the outstanding effectiveness of the provision. The Collegiate is very effective in recruiting local trainees, ensuring they achieve QTS, are judged to be good or outstanding trainees and gain local employment, often in their training school. This success is recognised in the Training and Development Agency for Schools' decision to increase the number of training places for the academic year 2010/11.
23. There is high demand for places with recommendations from schools and requests coming long after places have been filled. The application brochure gives clear information on the structure and expectations of the programme with insightful commentaries from former trainees. The selection procedure is rigorous; it has been tightened further, in the light of unexpected non-completions in the last two years, to place even greater emphasis on evaluating trainees' assertiveness and other personal qualities. Trainees remark on the challenge of giving a three minute presentation as well as taking tests in English and mathematics, and undergoing a panel interview. However, they also welcome the strong focus on the depth and extent of their experience in working with children. The Collegiate recruits well from ethnic minority groups

and is also successful in recruiting male trainees who currently outnumber female trainees. Trainees come with a range of grades and subjects in first degrees and with varying periods and types of work experience with several having been learning or teaching assistants. Trainees make good and often outstanding progress because the training schools and tutors work closely together to support and coach them. As in previous years, at least half of the trainees are judged to be outstanding, and the vast majority secured employment early. A good proportion of former trainees have been awarded posts of responsibility and one is now using her expertise in design and technology to tutor GTP trainees.

24. In the classroom, trainees are confident and manage the pupils well, showing a good understanding of the needs of individuals. They plan lessons carefully, often with clear guidance for teaching assistants, and make effective use of different resources and techniques, including drama, interactive whiteboards and 'talking partners' (pairs of pupils), to engage the class. Trainees show good skills in evaluating their own practice: comments on lessons and in behaviour journals show well how they have developed into critical, reflective practitioners.
25. The overall quality of training, the provision across the partnership and the use of resources are outstanding. The programme is well structured to give trainees a firm theoretical underpinning in education as well as acquiring classroom skills in two contrasting placements. It gets off to a strong start with the induction week towards the end of the summer term when trainees and tutors complete the training entry profile and discuss the reading and school related tasks to be completed for assessment in September. These tasks are well chosen to ensure that trainees and classteachers discuss key processes, such as setting up classrooms for a new school year, and trainees become familiar with their schools' policies and procedures. Good quality training at the centre, with some sessions shared with the PGCE trainees, gives trainees a sound introduction to educational theory, behaviour management, all subjects of the National Curriculum and other aspects including personal, social and health education and Every Child Matters. This is augmented by designated training in their own and other schools, including a day in a special school, a day tracking Year 7 pupils, observing English and other subject coordinators, and observing the teaching of early reading and phonics. There is scope, however, to draw even more on expertise within training schools to ensure all trainees gain developmental, practical experience.
26. Over the year, trainees complete a piece of action research as well as a series of tasks which link well theory, practice and personal reflection. Good examples are the assignment entitled, 'What do I know about my children so far?' and that to level pupils' work which draws on current national guidance in assessing pupils' attainment and setting targets for improvement.
27. Trainees benefit from high quality, conscientious tutoring. Tutors visit trainees every two weeks, conduct some joint observations with mentors and meet monthly as a team to review trainees' progress and to share best practice. Over the year, the positive yet critical feedback from their observations of trainees

teaching across the curriculum contributes significantly to trainees' progress. A useful step forward is the grading of some lessons. Mentors' comments on trainees' teaching and progress are likewise focused and accurate with clear guidance on how things could be more effective. Mentors give considerable support and time to trainees to ensure that they gain experience and skills, such as involving them in reviews for pupils with special educational needs and in compiling end of year reports for parents on their children's progress and attainment. The mentor's communication book is an excellent, pragmatic tool which tracks the professional guidance given, the targets set for trainees and subsequent outcomes. It also shows the high level of commitment of mentors, classteachers and other staff in their role as trainers.

28. The assessment of trainees' progress builds over the year. Mentors and tutors draw on observations of lessons as well as evidence from assignments, the mentors' communication books, the behaviour journals and trainees' files. These are generally well organised, comprehensive and provide a good record of what each trainee has achieved. Counselling and support is agreed if concerns arise. Trainees comment justly on the good level of personal and pastoral care, encouragement and flexibility shown by schools in meeting their needs. The individual training entry profiles structure well the initial training but tend to fall away as the year progresses although the content and targets are reviewed termly. Minimal use is made of the opportunity to evaluate trainees' progress and identify specific needs to be met on the placement in a second school, and similarly to personalise the training even further on return to the training school.
29. Recent training for mentors has focused on strengthening consistency in the use of Ofsted criteria in assessing trainees' progress and also how to help trainees lift their performance. A useful reference sheet, 'What the Standard should look like for the trainee', informs the assessment of trainees' progress against five key Standards at the end of the placement in a second school. The process is embedding; not all mentors are equally skilled in helping trainees to lift their performance. The final assessment, by a tutor new to the trainee, is rigorous and includes an observation of teaching as well as the testing out of some of the evidence against selected Standards.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

30. While the leaders for the PGCE course and the GTP programme are responsible for the organisation and implementation of the provision, the management committee oversees the work of the Collegiate. Members of the committee represent trainees, all schools in the partnership and their local authorities. Although the committee has increased in size over the last years, there is a stable core of headteachers whose schools have been in the partnership since it started. Many have also employed former trainees and are well placed to comment on the effectiveness of the training.

31. The overall capacity for further improvement is good rather than outstanding as judged by the Collegiate, because the committee and course and programme leaders are not using data and evaluations rigorously enough to evaluate and probe the effectiveness of the training and its impact. Similarly, action for improvement is not tied closely enough to intended outcomes for trainees making it difficult for the committee to gauge accurately the impact of action taken.
32. Since the last inspection, the committee has strengthened its work in evaluating the performance of the Collegiate by drawing on its members' professional expertise, particularly in quality assurance. The willing involvement of several headteachers, in monitoring policies, the work of tutors and in appraising the work of the course leaders, is a valuable step in holding the Collegiate to fuller account. The Committee also receives updates on individual trainees' progress and final assessment outcomes as well as information from evaluations conducted by leaders and tutors covering the training in school and at the centre. This comprehensive process of evaluation involves all partners, mentors, tutors and trainees and results in an extensive collection of views and suggestions for improvement. The committee and course leaders use this information well to identify where change is justified in course content, timing and mode of delivery. They give less attention to an incisive review of data and other evidence in relation to, for example, how well different groups of trainees perform against particular Standards for QTS and the factors that may account for any differences.
33. The two leaders ensure the content of the provision is up-to-date and reflects national and local priorities and initiatives. A strong focus on creativity, cross curricular planning and collaborative working is epitomised in the school trainee activity day when PGCE trainees work in teams with pupils on a theme, such as energy conservation. The key to this very good response to change is the willingness of the overall partnership to support trainees and to offer management and pedagogical expertise. An example of the partnership's creative approach to workforce management is the good arrangements have been agreed to ensure the smooth handover of the GTP leadership to a retiring headteacher of a partnership school.
34. The Collegiate acts well on points raised in external reports and outcomes from reviews. The joint PGCE and GTP improvement plan is a comprehensive working document. The current focus on improving the quality of training is linked well to questions in the self-evaluation document with the intention of reviewing how effectively changes in arrangements and content lead to improved outcomes for trainees. Although the plan has success criteria, these are not all expressed in specific, measurable outcomes for trainees.

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Primary	Employment-based routes
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		2	2
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2	2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1	1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2	2

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11; Ofsted July 2008; Reference no: 080128.

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