

Kent and Medway Training

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Kent and Medway Training The Leigh Technology Academy Green Street Green Road Dartford Kent DA1 1QE
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Inspection dates	7 – 11 June 2010
Lead inspector	Mary Massey HMI

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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11).
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

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

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. Kent and Medway Training is based at the Leigh Technology Academy in Dartford and is accredited to provide training for 43 trainees in 5 secondary subjects: business studies, English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. The course leads to qualified teacher status (QTS) and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), validated by the Open University Validation Service. The consortium also offers an employment-based route to QTS, and the two programmes are fully integrated, with one management group overseeing both.
4. During 2008/9 the consortium was made up of 17 schools in Kent and Medway. Both local authorities operate selection by ability at the end of Year 6, and the range of schools available is diverse, including the host academy, grammar, secondary modern and comprehensive schools in both urban and rural settings.

Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
- the high quality of the professional studies programme, which uses a wide range of expertise within the partnership to provide a strong theoretical background to teaching for trainees
 - the strength of the commitment of partnership schools and the way that this leads to identifying and meeting local employment needs successfully
 - the close attention to meeting trainees' individual needs, where high quality personal support ensures high retention
 - trainees' ability to take responsibility for their own training and establish collaborative working relationships with their students and colleagues
 - the prompt and efficient communication between the provider, schools and trainees which ensures that their needs are responded to quickly.

Recommendations

6. In order to improve consistency across the provision, the partnership should:
- develop consistency in the quality of feedback, target setting and coaching provided for trainees by mentors, so that the theoretical training delivered through professional studies is linked to practice.
7. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- develop a robust and clear tracking system which is understood fully by all trainers and trainees, which encourages trainees to make outstanding progress towards challenging targets.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

8. At least three quarters of trainees have been judged to be good or better by the end of their training over the last three years. Current data also show a similar picture of attainment for this year's cohort who are approaching the end of their training. Although the proportion of good or better trainees has shown some variation, overall these standards have been maintained. There is no clear trend of improvement, with the proportion of trainees judged as outstanding by the end of the course remaining steady over the last two years. Inspectors judged the provider to be slightly over-generous in its assessment of trainees' teaching and final grades but, even allowing for this, attainment would still remain good. Trainees studying how to teach English consistently perform better than those studying to teach other subjects. English generally has the highest numbers applying for the course, so there is a wider choice of trainees. Difficulties remain in recruiting high quality mathematics and science trainees and this is reflected in their outcomes, but numbers are very small. Retention rates are high and above the national average. The provider thus

meets local needs extremely well as almost all trainees are employed within partnership or other local schools.

9. Trainees are strongly self-motivated and willingly take responsibility for their own development. They are conscientious and ambitious to do well, with an open-minded approach which makes them generally responsive to new ideas and strategies. The result is confident teachers who make strong relationships with both colleagues and the students they teach, and who work very effectively in teams. They are less secure about how to assess students' achievement, but this is improving. The wide range of previous experience and qualifications means that many trainees need to undertake significant subject knowledge development. They do this with rigour and commitment, even though sometimes support from mentors is lacking. Trainees make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their teaching.
10. Trainees' good attainment, high retention and employment rates within the local area indicate that recruitment arrangements are successful. The vast majority of applicants to the course come from the local area and have a wide variety of previous experience and personal circumstances. Open days at partnership schools are used to encourage trainees to make themselves familiar with the demands of the course. Degree subjects may be unconventional and shortcomings in subject knowledge are identified at interview. Some trainees are required to complete pre-course tasks, including enhancement courses, as a pre-requisite for offering a place, although this is variable across subjects. The provider has already identified the need to make assessment of applicants' potential to become good teachers more precise and has piloted a more quantitative system for next year's intake. A working party set up to find ways of increasing recruitment of minority ethnic trainees has had some limited impact this year.
11. The individual support provided for trainees is a significant feature of the partnership, and contributes to the high retention rates. Any difficulties are responded to very quickly and, if necessary, extra resources allocated to provide extra support. Leaders ensure that as far as possible they accommodate trainees' personal circumstances without compromising the quality of the training they provide. The final two weeks of 'value-added' experience for trainees provide a useful opportunity for trainees to identify and then fill their gaps in experience. Some trainees who have experienced personal problems have returned and completed the course after a short break. Although individual training plans based on an initial needs analysis and subject audit are set up they are not used effectively until trainees start the course.
12. The programme provides good training which ensures that most trainees make good progress from their starting points. The skills of expert practitioners from the schools within the partnership and local area are used to provide a very comprehensive professional studies programme. This covers a wide range of relevant topics which support progression through the course, including a strong theoretical background and practical strategies that trainees can use in the classroom. These topics are reinforced through the subject studies programmes, which frequently revisits and develops them further and puts

theory into a subject-specific context. Programmes are regularly modified to meet local and national needs and to respond to trainees' evaluations. Although some mentors in schools use the programme to provide a regular, coherent focus for their work with trainees, this is not consistent across the partnership. Many trainees are sufficiently self-motivated to make the connections themselves.

13. Trainees' progress is monitored regularly through lesson observation. From the trainees' files, progression over time is evident, but feedback from mentors is not sufficiently focused on learning and is frequently more about teaching and behaviour management strategies. Targets are not always sufficiently subject-specific or linked to a particular observation focus. Although professional tutors generally have a deep understanding of the principles behind teaching that they often pass on to trainees, the quality of feedback given by mentors is more variable, and frequently follows an instructive rather than a coaching model. The learning theory that trainees have learned from professional studies and their assignments is not reliably used to provide a rationale for activities in the classroom.
14. Assessment systems for judging trainees' progress against the standards are reliable and the pass/fail boundary is secure. Systems for setting targets and assessment over the last three years have led to good outcomes and judgements of trainees' attainment by the end of the course are broadly accurate. Recent changes to improve assessment with a stronger focus on tracking progress have led to a lack of clarity across the partnership and thus inconsistency in the application of the new criteria. Formal lesson observations are closely linked to the Standards, but there is no consistent understanding, by either trainers or trainees, of the criteria that should be used to judge the quality of a lesson. Although targets are set and reviewed regularly, they are often not sufficiently challenging to move good trainees towards outstanding.
15. Schools are generally successful in providing experience that covers a wide age and ability range and the opportunity for trainees to teach topics they are less familiar with. If gaps in subject knowledge are not filled through teaching experience then often trainees take full responsibility for remedying this themselves, although it is clear from the course handbook that mentors should direct this.
16. Resources are allocated to ensure that trainees can make good progress, and all groups achieve equally well. The resource base at the host school is well stocked and well used by trainees to support their studies. Many use the portal or developing virtual learning environment to share or access resources and as a discussion forum. There is variability in how well the provider's resources allocated to schools are monitored.
17. This is a small partnership which works very cooperatively. There is a high level of support and commitment from senior managers, which ensure that local employment needs are met very successfully. Communication to schools is prompt and efficient, with schools kept up to date with both practical operational issues and course developments. Over the last three years, good

provision across the partnership has sustained trainees' good progress. However, recent changes in procedures, particularly in assessment of trainees' progress, mean that mentors are less secure and this has led to some inconsistency. The provider has not always identified shortcomings in the quality of mentoring and this has limited the progress of some trainees. Training of mentors is broadly good, but the lack of a strong coaching model hinders good trainees in becoming outstanding.

18. Outcomes for all identifiable groups are good, and all trainees have an equal opportunity to succeed. The providers' support for trainees' individual needs is a strength and trainees are very confident that any issues they have will be dealt with promptly and sensitively. In-depth knowledge of the schools in the partnership and their personnel means that any difficulties are solved quickly. The provider has recently focused on ensuring that trainees are well prepared to teach students from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds and this has led to increasing confidence in supporting those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. Trainees' understanding of the issues linked to diversity is tackled through the professional studies programme, even though their direct experience is limited. Mentors do not always compensate for the lack of direct experience by asking trainees to consider how they might apply their theoretical knowledge to a range of different practical situations, for example teaching a student with limited English, or how they might extend a lesson plan to meet the needs of more able students.

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

19. The provider has good capacity to improve. Good attainment has been sustained over three years. Although there has been no significant change in the proportion of trainees graded good or outstanding, both employment rates and retention have improved in that period. The vast majority of trainees from the partnership are still teaching and most of these teachers are working within the partnership or in other schools in the local area.
20. Leaders have a good shared understanding of the vision and rationale underpinning the partnership and there is a high level of trust between the partners. Strong commitment from senior leaders in partnership schools ensures good quality training. Roles and responsibilities are made clear in the provider's handbook and are well understood, particularly at whole school, professional tutor, subject lead mentor, and course management levels. All stakeholders are involved in regular evaluation of the quality of the course. Trainees' views are taken into account and immediate problems are dealt with promptly and efficiently in order to safeguard outcomes. Changes to the timing of specific professional and subject studies sessions for example, have been made in response to trainee requests. However, current quality assurance systems are not sufficiently challenging, critical or focused on trainee outcomes. As a result, variability in the quality of mentoring has not been

identified or challenged, although the management committee is in the process of appointing deputy subject leaders to increase capacity for lesson observation and quality assurance.

21. The strategic management committee does not have sufficient focus on improving outcomes for trainees. At an operational level, a clear cycle of improvement planning and review has maintained good outcomes and is leading to improvements in provision. The improvement plan accurately identifies priorities linked to trainees' outcomes, and is regularly monitored and updated. However, it is not fully supported by an overarching strategic action plan. Some areas for development identified from self-evaluation, such as improving the recruitment of minority ethnic trainees, developing trainees' strategies for tackling students' weak literacy skills, and ensuring that the Standards linked to use of assessment are met well, have led to considerable improvement in trainees' skills in this area. However, recent changes to the training management structure have meant that the response to the new initial teacher training inspection framework has been slow to get started. Some new initiatives, such as the implementation of assessment criteria to inform tracking, and new procedures for interviewing, are at an early stage of implementation and have not had time to have a measurable impact. Development planning at subject level is not closely linked to the priorities that have been accurately identified on the improvement plan.
22. The provider has demonstrated good capacity to anticipate and respond to change locally. Senior managers are able to respond to local initiatives because they know the partnership schools very well, and are very aware of the local context. For example, the changing nature of pedagogy in academies and new buildings has led to developing trainees' skills for team teaching and alternative ways of organising learning. At a national level, there is a good focus on helping trainees understand curriculum changes, 14 to 19 developments and new initiatives. Trainees have a good understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues.

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

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

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

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