

University of Bedfordshire

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

Provider address	Bedford Campus Polhill Avenue Bedford MK41 9EA
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Lead inspector	Sonja Øyen 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. The University of Bedfordshire was established in 2006 following the amalgamation of the University of Luton and the Bedford campus of De Montfort University. It took over the De Montfort University provision of initial teacher education which, since September 2009, is located in the Departments of Primary Education, Secondary and Post Compulsory Education, and Physical Education and Sports Studies, all within the Faculty of Education and Sport. The university provides teacher education courses for the primary, secondary and post-compulsory sectors, including employment-based routes into teaching for graduates. While primary and secondary provision involves pre-service courses, provision in the post-compulsory sector is in-service; trainees work for the nine partner colleges that deliver the courses leading to qualifications to teach in the lifelong learning sector as well as in the university's certificate and postgraduate certificate in education. The university works in partnership with over 500 schools and colleges in several local authorities to deliver initial teacher education.

A commentary on the provision

4. The following are particular features of the provider and its initial teacher training programmes:
 - the widening, innovative relationship with schools, colleges and local authorities to develop and provide new models of partnership
 - its effectiveness in developing reflective practitioners
 - effective recruitment and selection of trainees who are well suited to teaching
 - strong pastoral support, which fosters well trainees' personal and professional development
 - the good attainment of trainees and their success in gaining employment.
5. There are particularly strong features in some programmes that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision:
 - high-quality mentoring in the graduate teacher programme
 - effective systems to track and promote trainees' progress on the graduate teacher programme
 - good practice in further education in the approach to equality and diversity
 - the joint participation of school mentors and centre based tutors in compiling the Year 1 Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme.
6. The following recommendations should be considered to improve the quality of the outcomes for trainees:
 - refine mentors' skills in identifying exactly what trainees need to do to improve their practice
 - ensure that the descriptors used to measure and track the progress of primary and secondary trainees align fully with the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
 - link the actions in improvement plans to precise outcomes for trainees.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

7. The university offers initial teacher training provision in the primary phase at undergraduate and postgraduate level. There are just over 400 trainees on the four-year degree programme leading to the Primary BEd with QTS. At the end of their first year, trainees opt to follow a subject or phase specialism and roughly 30 trainees in each of Years 2, 3 and 4 have selected the Early Years option (for teaching 3 to 7-year-olds). Similarly, 18 trainees in Years 3 and 4 have opted to study French as a specialist subject.
8. Of the 82 trainees following the programme leading to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Primary Education, five trainees have opted for the Early Years strand, a pilot programme with Training and Development Agency funding for 2009–10. Another 32 trainees are taking programmes leading to the award of PGCE Primary Education with Primary Languages: 16 trainees are specialising in Italian and 16 in Spanish. These trainees undertake an additional placement in a school in Italy or Spain. The postgraduate programmes offer credits at Master's level.
9. The university works in partnership with around 250 schools in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes, Luton, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire. Revalidated and restructured primary and postgraduate courses were introduced in September 2009 along with new ways of working with schools. In Year 1, 20 trainees work in clusters of schools for two days each week, with mentors deciding on relevant learning experiences. Current trainees in Years 2, 3, and 4 undertake placements supervised and assessed by mentors and with visits from centre-based tutors in the new role of partnership quality assurance tutor. In collaboration with Milton Keynes local authority, a pilot programme, with a partnership manager jointly funded by Milton Keynes and the university, has involved 20 postgraduate trainees working in schools in challenging circumstances.

Key strengths

10. The key strengths are:
 - the good quality of pastoral support for trainees
 - the effective recruitment and selection of well motivated trainees who have the necessary qualities to be good teachers
 - the reciprocal links between theory and practice that give trainees a good underpinning in how to teach
 - the involvement of schools in the development and initiation of innovative models of partnership in response to local need.

Required actions

11. In order to improve the quality of provision, the provider must:
- ensure that all trainees experience at least good mentoring
 - refine the work of the partnership steering group, the partnership quality assurance tutor and the systems used to evaluate the quality of training and its impact on trainees' progress.

Recommendations

12. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- revise the content of the performance review profile to bring it fully in line with QTS standards
 - ensure that trainees' targets are sufficiently challenging and trainees are clear about what they need to do to achieve them
 - ensure that all improvement planning identifies clear success criteria related to outcomes for trainees.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

13. The overall attainment for undergraduate and postgraduate trainees is good. There is an upward trend in trainees' attainment with a growing proportion of trainees who gain outstanding grades by the end of their final placement. The number of undergraduates gaining first-class degrees is also rising, as is the success of postgraduate trainees in working at Master's level. The rise in academic and professional attainment is directly linked to the focus on helping trainees to lift their performance. The university is successful in meeting its aim of developing trainees as reflective practitioners with a clear understanding of the link between theory and practice. Nearly all trainees complete the course and find employment, often locally. Several postgraduate trainees have been offered teaching posts in the hub of Milton Keynes schools in challenging circumstances, where they undertook their placements.
14. The university is successful in recruiting and selecting trainees who are well motivated and who have the personal qualities needed to be teachers, including the ability to manage their own professional development. A high level of interest in the courses is fostered by word of mouth as well as by the good quality of information, in print and online, which highlights well the university's diverse cultural mix. The recent push to market the programmes to under-represented groups has been effective with an increase both in the take-up and in the number of places offered to males, especially on the postgraduate programme, and to applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds. The university is well on track possibly to exceed sector targets in these areas. Trainees commented that they found the selection process rigorous; they enjoyed talking about their essential experience in schools, and valued the involvement of teaching staff from the partnership schools. Before starting the

programme, postgraduate trainees specialising in Italian and Spanish had acted on the guidance in how to improve their fluency in the target language.

15. Trainees make good progress overall from their starting points. Some make marked strides because of constant challenge through strong coaching and specific, practical guidance in how to fulfil their potential. For others, this is more uneven due to, as a trainee stated, 'the luck of the draw' in the quality of mentoring and support in schools, especially for those in Years 2, 3 and 4. While mentors' written feedback on trainees' teaching is generally encouraging, it often lacks a critical edge to challenge trainees. Resultant targets are unclear as to exactly how trainees can improve. This is why, despite some good aspects, the overall quality of training and the consistency of quality of provision across the partnership, are only satisfactory. Partnership quality assurance tutors are starting to identify where the provision is fostering or limiting trainees' progress. Their increasing knowledge of schools' particular strengths supports the intention of course leaders to tailor more closely the allocation of placements to trainees' individual needs.
16. The programmes are coherent and give trainees a good mix of centre- and school-based training across the curriculum. The restructured courses take full account of national priorities including the systematic teaching of letters and sounds and the creative curriculum. The teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and science is revisited and extended in each year of the BEd programme. Postgraduate trainees also gain a sound grounding in these core subjects. While trainees specialising in Early Years showed a good grasp of the principles of practice in this key stage, others' knowledge was limited. Teething problems on the pilot postgraduate course in Early Years have been judiciously used as developmental points. The five trainees have drawn on their differing levels of knowledge and expertise to refine course content and materials, such as those to structure the planning of activities in school. As a result, all trainees have moved on well.
17. The overall quality of centre-based training is good. The university is making effective use of staff research projects to support programme developments. Trainees like the balance of lectures and workshops especially when tutors model effective classroom practice and develop trainees' subject knowledge. This was exemplified well in a mathematics session for Year 1 trainees on the teaching of fractions and decimals when the tutor picked up on trainees' misconceptions and related them to the classroom. Trainees make good use of the virtual learning environment to download session outlines and to access other materials, including work from other trainees. They also undertake a wide range of assignments which link well school and centre-based elements. Although the quality of marking varies, it is generally rigorous in identifying issues in the use of English and in the structure of academic writing. Several undergraduate and postgraduate trainees, including one with dyslexia, knew they had gained higher grades in subsequent assignments through following advice given.
18. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Trainees praise the friendliness of tutors and mentors, and know the university takes heed of their concerns.

Schools pay good attention to ensuring trainees are aware of key policies and safeguarding practices. The new Year 1 BEd course is giving trainees a holistic view of how schools are meeting the Every Child Matters agenda. Trainees' reflections in their e-portfolios showed a developing, often well-informed, overview of theoretical underpinnings as well as an understanding of some of the factors that affect pupils' learning. All the BEd trainees benefit from their study of a subject and/or aspect of education in more depth with a short multi-agency placement in Year 4. One trainee commented that her work in special educational needs had enhanced her employability. Postgraduate trainees who have worked in schools in challenging circumstances show a sound grasp of differentiation according to need. The university's links with schools in several local authorities provide placements for trainees to work with pupils from differing cultural heritages. However, the opportunistic nature of such experience means that trainees' evidence is often thin, though adequate, of having met the relevant QTS standards.

19. Performance review profiles, with clusters of descriptors relating to QTS standards, chart well trainees' progress on each placement; but the grid entries do not all correspond exactly to the standards. As a consequence, some elements are not picked up in mentors' and tutors' feedback to the trainee or identified in targets. Nevertheless, the assessment of trainees' overall attainment is accurate. Tutors know their trainees well. Pastoral support is strong; trainees spoke highly of the quick response, advice and practical help from mentors and particularly from centre-based tutors. The regular reviews of trainees' progress ensure early identification, tracking and support for trainees causing concern. For some trainees, the personal counselling that resulted was a key factor in their staying on the course.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

20. The overall capacity for further improvement is good. Although there are some weaker aspects in the evaluation of performance, strengths in the way leadership anticipates change, plans and takes action for improvement have led to improved outcomes for trainees and given a solid foundation for continuing developments in programmes and within the partnership. A key factor is the proactive approach of the leadership in engaging the partnership in how best to respond to national and local initiatives. The restructured programmes reflect well curricular issues and local needs, such as the teaching of modern foreign languages.
21. A clear focus on continuing improvement is reflected in the central QTS improvement plan, part of a five-year strategy, and the current action plans for the primary programmes. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and strengthening as data accumulate. Moves to establish robust databases, including information about schools within the partnership and trainees' progress, are constrained, however, by the university's information technology systems. Programme leaders are aware that the interrogation of data, including those related to the

performance of different groups of trainees and their attainment in relation to specific standards, is at a relatively simple level.

22. Leaders have a sound understanding of the key strengths and areas for development in provision through the review and evaluation of courses, feedback from trainees and trainers, the annual monitoring report and reports from external examiners. A good example is seen in the push, started in 2008–9, to train mentors in how to boost the performance of grade 2 trainees. This was evaluated in an analysis of trainees' performance leading to the identification of possible trends, factors and issues, which inform current action plans. Although these plans are being implemented, the scope of evaluation is limited by their generality. There are few explicit success criteria related directly to intended outcomes for trainees. The role of partnership quality assurance tutor has shifted the focus from supervision to monitoring and moderation of quality, including the use of the performance review profiles. This is yielding helpful information but not enough as yet to give a definitive overview of the profile of mentoring and the impact of mentoring on outcomes for trainees.
23. Revised management and administrative structures are bedding in and systems are being refined. Programme leaders have some evidence of the positive impact of these changes but accept that they do not yet have firm evidence about the positive impact on outcomes for trainees to secure grades of good for the quality of training, the effectiveness of the partnership and the evaluation of performance.
24. The partnership steering group, comprising representatives from the university, schools and local authorities, is still relatively young as a management agency and not formally evaluating its own effectiveness in bringing about improvement nor evaluating the overall effectiveness of the partnership. It is giving a clear strategic lead in driving change in line with the university's vision of widening participation, meeting local workforce needs and developing a culture of professional development grounded in initial teacher education. Additional enhanced partnership schemes have already been agreed with Luton and Peterborough local authorities for the next academic year. Through working parties, the steering group is making effective use of expertise within the partnership to produce guidance for new ways of working. Mentors made significant contributions to the content and shape of the current Year 1 course.
25. With several pilot schemes and systems being trialled, chances have been missed to build in robust and ongoing evaluation. For example, although there is positive anecdotal evidence about the Year 1 course and the pilot programme in Milton Keynes, programme leaders and the partnership steering group are not yet in a well informed position to indicate how the outcomes for trainees compare with those from the courses undertaken by previous trainees.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

26. The university offers an undergraduate four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) with QTS in physical education, and a selection of one-year PGCE courses leading to QTS covering the age ranges 7–14, 11–16 and 14–19. Trainees on the 7–14 route (Key Stages 2 and 3) specialise in mathematics, English or science. The 11–16 QTS programme provides training in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, physical education or dance. In the 14–19 age range, the existing subjects of applied information and communication technology (ICT), applied business, and applied leisure and tourism have been extended to include training for two Diplomas: creative and media, and society and health and development. The PGCE courses can lead to qualifications at postgraduate or professional graduate level.

Key strengths

27. The key strengths are:

- trainees' good attainment and success in progressing into employment
- the very effective development of trainees as reflective practitioners who are strongly committed to improving their professional practice
- the strong pastoral support for trainees which contributes to their progress
- robust recruitment and selection procedures that are effective in ensuring trainees have the potential to be effective teachers
- the good quality of training on the undergraduate and PGCE physical education courses and PGCE English course.

Required actions

28. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider must:

- improve the quality of centre-based training in professional studies to ensure it models best practice in teaching and is relevant to trainees' individual needs
- ensure all elements of training combine coherently to build on trainees' prior knowledge, skills and experience and meet their development needs more effectively
- take action to eradicate inconsistencies in the quality of school-based training and ensure training meets the individual needs of trainees well
- improve self-evaluation to ensure incisive analysis of outcomes for individual and all identifiable groups of trainees.

Recommendations

29. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:

- refine assessment criteria to ensure they are accurately aligned with the requirements of the QTS standards
- ensure documentation underpinning communication across the partnership is clear and concise.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 3

30. Trainees' attainment is good overall; comparative data for the current cohort confirms a modest trend of improvement. The university has recently established a set of characteristics that it views as essential features of effective trainees. Central to this vision is that training will foster in trainees the ability to be reflective practitioners. The provider's success in promoting this aspect of trainees' development is a clear strength. For example, the vast majority of trainees engage confidently in professional dialogue regarding their teaching and are proactive in taking the necessary steps to secure their own development. Similarly, their reflective journals confirm their ability to evaluate school experiences and identify how they can improve.
31. Trainees show a strong commitment to the all-round development of learners by becoming regularly involved in the wider aspects of school life. In the classroom, they demonstrate the ability to incorporate a range of strategies that effectively engage learners, employ a personable approach and set clear expectations for behaviour ensuring a productive classroom environment. Most trainees use their subject knowledge well to respond effectively to questions posed by learners, and to explain concepts in a number of ways. For example, trainees on the 14–19 programme draw on their previous work experience to ensure learning is delivered in an applied context. Most trainees have a secure awareness of issues related to cultural diversity although, for some trainees, school-based experience to apply their learning is quite limited. Similarly, some trainees' skills in using ICT creatively to support learning are at a basic level due in part to the limited availability of resources in some placements. There is also variation in the effectiveness with which trainees plan to meet the needs of different learners. Trainees in English and physical education are generally more competent in this respect.
32. Selection procedures are robust and ensure that the vast majority of trainees have the potential to become effective teachers. The university has been proactive in trying to improve recruitment through marketing courses in targeted areas, running taster days and establishing subject knowledge enhancement courses for potential mathematics and chemistry trainees. Consequently, recruitment targets have been met in the current year and there is an improving trend in recruiting trainees from under-represented groups, including those declaring a disability and from minority ethnic heritages. Demand is high for places on the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in physical education and the strength of trainees recruited to this subject is reflected in their good progress and attainment.

33. The proportion of trainees who complete their chosen course is broadly in line with the sector average with notably improved retention rates for trainees on the 14–19 applied subjects route. The vast majority of trainees successfully progress into employment, many in the locality, confirming the effectiveness of provision in meeting local needs.
34. The assessment of trainees is broadly accurate. However, a minority of the descriptors used to assess trainees' level of attainment in relation to the QTS standards are not matched exactly to the requirements, and this leads to a slightly over-generous view of trainees' achievement with regard to some aspects. Trainees appreciate the regular feedback they receive and the majority engage confidently in professional dialogue with their school-based mentors. That said, the quality of mentoring differs considerably across the partnership so the impact on trainees' progress is variable. This variation is reflected in the sharpness with which the feedback identifies what the trainee needs to do to improve and the degree of challenge in subsequent targets.
35. Trainees are positive overall about their school experiences and the good contribution that these make to their progress. They confirm that most placements provide an appropriate contrast but that the choice of placement is not always matched well to their individual development needs. Trainees also highlight that the quality and regularity of school-based training sessions vary considerably, for example, between placement schools. For trainees on the 14–19 applied courses the opportunity to promote progress through work experience and placements in providers of further education is under-developed.
36. While trainees identify some benefits of the centre-based professional studies sessions, finding the input from school-based practitioners particularly relevant, they are least positive about this aspect of the course. They identify weaknesses that include the limited application of session content to classroom contexts and missed opportunities for trainers to model good practice in their teaching. Trainees are more positive about subject studies particularly in English, mathematics, physical education and dance. For example, physical education trainees welcome the chance to gain additional coaching qualifications which broaden their expertise and support their progression into employment. Nevertheless, there is notable variation of views between trainees regarding the quality of subject study sessions. For example, Key Stage 2/3 trainees identify a marked difference between the core subjects in the effectiveness of training.
37. Overall, while separate elements of the course have individual strengths, the coherence of their combination is underdeveloped. In part, this is due to the absence of an overarching individual training plan for most trainees to link all course elements together and give a clear structure of how these elements combine to meet an individual's training needs. Consequently, the training provided does not always build well enough on trainees' prior knowledge, skills and experiences to ensure trainees make all the progress they could.

38. Allocated resources to resolve identified weaknesses in modern foreign language provision are resulting in improvements in stronger recruitment and higher attainment of trainees. Resources are also often used effectively to meet trainees' individual needs. For example, case studies clearly demonstrate how targeted resources have helped trainees to stay on the course and make better progress. However, the provider has not been able to secure a further education placement for all trainees currently on the 14–19 applied course. Consequently, this has limited the opportunity for some trainees to gain broader experience and understanding of the range and levels of qualifications associated with their subject area.
39. A strong commitment to the partnership is exemplified in schools' willing engagement in developing new 'consortium-based' delivery models for training. An innovative model for teacher training, devised by the university in conjunction with a lead school and Central Bedfordshire Council, is enhancing the quality of training and successfully promoting consistency across a group of placement schools. Current trainees within these schools are very positive about their experience and the impact of the training on their development.
40. The visits to schools of university tutors, in their role as partnership quality assurance tutors, make a valuable contribution to ensuring all school-based trainers have high expectations for trainees. They also enable useful communication between the university and placement schools. A range of strategies, including the introduction of structured documentation to support weekly mentor meetings and focused mentor training sessions, is helping to improve quality and consistency across the partnership. However, not all of this information is clear or concise. While the visits are giving the university a much clearer view about where school-based training strengths lie, it is too early to see the full impact of tutors' work to eradicate identified weaker elements of provision. Consequently, variation in quality remains an issue and the overall quality of the provision is satisfactory.
41. Support for the personal well-being of trainees is a strong feature of the provision. Trainees are confident that if they raise concerns they will be dealt with, citing examples of where university tutors have responded swiftly to deal with issues. Case studies also confirm the provider's commitment to removing personal and professional barriers to trainees' success. For example, regular reviews of trainees' progress involving all tutors ensure emerging concerns are identified early and interventions are put in place to help trainees get back on track.

The capacity for further improvement
and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 3

42. Processes for self-evaluation are well embedded as part of the provider's approach to continuous improvement. The development of the quality assurance role of university tutors from September 2009 has resulted in a more systematic approach to evaluating the quality of school-based training experiences. Evidence from these quality assurance visits and from external examiners' reports supplement evaluations from trainees and mentors to ensure comprehensive monitoring of the provision. In addition, the use of trainee perception surveys for each unit allows the provider to gain a deeper insight into the impact of other elements of training on trainees' progress. However, this detailed evaluation regarding the quality of provision is not matched with a similarly rigorous focus on evaluating the outcomes for individuals and identifiable groups of trainees. Consequently, the sharpness with which the provider can identify strengths and areas for development in relation to outcomes for trainees is limited. The provider accepts that this is a key reason why its self-evaluation was a grade generous in many elements.
43. The provider has been proactive in driving forward change to improve outcomes for trainees. The vision for the development of the partnership has been instrumental in the setting up of innovative models of working in the spirit of a coherent and collaborative approach to initial teacher education and the continuing professional development of the school workforce. Courses have been regularly reviewed and refined to take account of local and national initiatives while drawing on latest research to inform training. Managers make good use of external expertise and the provider's strong links with different agencies and organisations to ensure training is up to date. As a result, trainees are willing to utilise novel approaches in their teaching and demonstrate the ability to contextualise learning in the classroom. The extension of the 14–19 applied route reflects the introduction of Diploma courses in local schools and colleges and the need to recruit well trained staff. New technologies are increasingly being used to enhance training. For example, a project to explore the promotion of professional dialogue through virtual tutorials and on-line peer support for English trainees has been very well received.
44. Faculty restructuring, new leadership appointments and a five-year plan underpin the provider's vision for the future of initial teacher training in the secondary phase. Shorter-term priorities for improvement are informed by the findings of internal and external evaluation with appropriate actions. Criteria to measure the success of action taken are not always sharply focused on the intended impact on outcomes for trainees. However, inspection evidence confirms that the provider's action is producing a steady trend of improvement in outcomes for trainees. For example, steps taken to increase the rigour of selection criteria for potential trainees in the 14–19 course, have had a clear impact on improving course completion rates and trainees' attainment. Nevertheless, despite improvements in some subjects, there is no convincing upward trend in completion rates overall. While there has been progress in improving systems and procedures, the impact of this work in many respects is still to be fully seen.

Employment-based routes to qualified teacher status

Context

45. The graduate teacher programme provides training leading to QTS. Currently, there are 15 primary and 27 secondary trainees. Of these, 10 primary and 15 secondary trainees are funded through the Training and Development Agency and are employed on a supernumerary basis at five primary and 10 secondary partnership schools. The other trainees are funded by and employed in a further 13 schools. Secondary trainees specialise in English, design and technology, ICT, mathematics, physical education, science, business, dance and music.

Key strengths

46. The key strengths are:

- an equal and valuable partnership between university, schools and trainees, which ensures good cohesion and progression
- excellent systems used effectively to select high-quality trainees with good prior experience and who attain well, and become reflective, well motivated, confident and articulate teachers
- well-founded developmental plans, supplemented by highly effective personalised training plans which support and extend all trainees
- high-quality mentoring and a commitment to continuing professional development, which results in trainees receiving excellent training
- robust and rigorous systems implemented consistently to assess, track and promote trainees' progress
- strong programme leadership, which ensures clarity of purpose and equality of provision.

Recommendations

47. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:
- extend the opportunities for trainees to deepen their experiences of planning and teaching in a diverse society.
48. In order to strengthen the assessment of performance and the impact of improvement planning the provider should:
- strengthen the strategic analysis and action planning processes with a clear emphasis on achieving precise improvements based on outcomes for trainees' teaching.

Overall effectiveness

Grade:1

49. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees is outstanding. As a result, the attainment of the vast majority of trainees is good and for a substantial minority it is outstanding. All groups attain good or better levels; the attainment of the self-funded trainees has been consistently outstanding for several years.
50. Trainees are very positive about their choice of provider and the training, both university and school-based. They are reflective, confident and articulate and very aware of their own strengths and areas for development. Their classrooms are purposeful and lively learning environments with positive behaviour management. Trainees plan sequences of lessons with a good range of interesting tasks and resources which engage all pupils. They have a very good understanding of key aspects of teaching including assessment, special educational needs, diversity and child protection. They develop very good collaborative working relationships with other adults and are already making a strong contribution to the wider world of the schools.
51. Recruitment and selection are significant strengths. Their effectiveness is proven over time, with trainees achieving consistently well, with very high completion rates and 100% employment record. Many take up posts in partnership schools. The schools are fully involved in the selection and interviewing process and the provider takes care to match trainees to schools where they are most likely to flourish. Interview activities are thorough and continually refined; for example, a session with pupils has become more interactive to challenge candidates and to ensure those most suitable for teaching are selected. Self-funded trainees are required to provide evidence of extensive prior experience of their work with pupils and their funding schools are quality assured to make sure they can carry out and support training. Induction starts immediately following selection with the completion of initial audits, time spent in school and the setting up of a personalised training plan. As a result, trainees get off to a flying start.
52. The quality and effectiveness of training and assessment are outstanding and enable all trainees to make good progress and reach their potential. A well planned generic programme of activities builds appropriate experiences over the year but the real strength is in the high quality of the personalised training plans. These reflect trainees' prior knowledge, needs and interests, and build on the strengths.
53. Sessions in professional studies are relevant and practical, giving trainees a good balance of theory and practice. Staff from the lead school provide the sessions in secondary professional studies. These are up to date, interactive and very highly rated by the trainees who call this training 'superb!' Subject training sessions provided by the university are also evaluated positively by primary and secondary trainees. The primary provision has improved during this year since the appointment of a designated primary leader and is now much more tailored to the specific needs of this group. Trainees commented that sessions in mathematics and science were inspirational and gave examples of how sessions have raised their confidence, improved their ability to teach and resulted in immediate positive impact in the classroom. The assignment

provides a good opportunity for trainees to develop interests and to deepen their understanding of theory and practice.

54. The quality of the mentors' support and training is consistently good. The individualised training plans indicate that trainees benefit from well-timed support and training from a variety of school-based colleagues. Assessment against the QTS standards is thorough, rigorous and developmental. Succinct, constructive lesson feedback notes include useful subject-specific guidance and smart short-term targets for improvement. Longer-term targets, set in mentor meetings and at review points, are well focused and subsequent paperwork shows they are followed up well and developed further. For example, in trainees' files the evidence for meeting some of the standards has been refined from reading and understanding policies to using the policies in lessons and evaluating their effectiveness, to finally their application in the second placement.
55. The links between centre, school and second placement training are well designed, cohesive and developmental. Contrasting second school placements are chosen carefully to ensure that trainees experience social and cultural diversity, and good use is made of expertise in schools to supplement training. As a result, trainees show good awareness of the issues around equality and diversity. For TDA-funded trainees, the second placement is in one of the other partnership schools so trainees remain in a school environment where staff are familiar with expected mentoring practice and procedures. Self-funded trainees do not operate in quite such a controlled context but, for them too, placements are selected to widen their experiences. Trainees value these placements and several indicated that they would like them to be longer. The training is comprehensive for teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language. Evidence in trainees' files shows good follow-up reading and reflection to complement the taught sessions and arranged visits. However, not all trainees have the opportunity to develop a practical understanding of working in a linguistically diverse setting.
56. Systems of ongoing moderation and assessment are rigorous and consistently used to track the trainees' progress. Trainees' reflective logs are an integral part of the evaluation and review process. They are increasingly well-focused and evaluative, showing how trainees develop a very good understanding of their strengths and areas for further development and can contribute fully as partners in the regular review meetings. These meetings between mentors, link tutors and trainees ensure a good degree of accuracy in the assessment of trainees' progress and attainment.
57. Trainees have access to high-quality resources in schools and from the university, including on-line information and materials from training sessions. As well as the tailor-made university training sessions, trainees benefit from a wide range of school in-service training; good examples are the local authority's safeguarding sessions and specialised training relating to the specific context of a school. Trainees make good use of their own skills and interests by taking part in and contributing to extra-curricular activities in school. The key strength in this area is, however, the excellent use of human

resources with well trained mentors, subject leaders, link tutors and specialists, all ensuring highly responsive individual training plans.

58. The success of the programme is very much because of an equal partnership with mutual respect between schools, the university and trainees. This results in very high expectations and consistency across the partnership. The schools have a vested interest in 'growing' their own high-quality staff and they do provide good training environments. Most of the schools have been involved for several years and, as a result, the group of mentors is well trained and relatively stable. Rigorous quality assurance and individual training for new schools and mentors ensures that all partners from the outset are very clear about roles and responsibilities, what they need to do and how best to do it. The regular meetings between mentors, link tutors and trainees support this high level of coherence. Communication is excellent and close contact ensures consistency and rapid action when problems arise.
59. There is a strong focus on inclusion. The partnership is flexible and helpful in supporting and taking account of trainees' individual needs and circumstances. The nature of the course means that there is strong recruitment of older trainees from non-traditional routes into teaching and an understanding of the impact that changes in family circumstances can have. However, recruitment and attainment information has not been analysed to identify trends in recruitment over time from traditionally under-represented groups or to see whether all groups achieve equally well.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade:1

60. The provider's capacity to sustain high-quality outcomes for trainees and to take the actions required to secure improvements where necessary is outstanding.
61. Self-evaluation involves all partners; feedback from mentors, trainees and tutors is used well to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The provider accurately judged the provision to be outstanding but underestimated the overall quality of its capacity to improve. This modesty characterises the leadership of the programme. The course leader is meticulous in her expectations that each aspect of the course will be carried out effectively and ensures that there is clarity of purpose and direction. Where shortcomings have been identified, the provider has acted decisively, for example by appointing a primary leader and also by transforming the programme in secondary professional studies.
62. There are coherent systems for accessing and using information about trainees' attainment and progress. The work of the partnership quality assurance tutors is instrumental in this as these tutors provide the regular contact with trainees and mentors in schools. Formal benchmarking activities across schools and university programmes and internal and external moderation and assessment

ensure accuracy of judgements. School leaders also meet regularly to review the programme. The course leader provides strong liaison with other providers of initial teacher education to moderate judgements and share good practice. As there are relatively small numbers of trainees, evaluation tends to be at a very individual and practical level. The analysis of data is restricted and strategic analysis has therefore been rather limited. For example, the differences in outcomes between self-funded and TDA-funded trainees or between other different groups have not been analysed rigorously enough to identify possible issues and actions to take.

63. The partnership between schools and higher education is driving innovation and the university is establishing further partnerships to build on the existing strong provision. Swift responses to change and initiatives are possible because of the close-knit nature of the provision and the quality of personalised training plans. As a consequence, the training is relevant and fully up to date with good account taken of national matters such as the Rose and Williams reviews, development of Diplomas and curriculum changes. The impact of this is evident in trainees' teaching and planning as seen, for example, in the emphasis on investigative science in primary classes.
64. The programme addresses local needs very well, particularly the needs of the participating schools, as it adds highly motivated, good and outstanding trainees to the local pool of teachers. It supports imaginative solutions to long-standing problems such as difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and talented teachers to specialist schools.
65. Striving for improvement forms an integral part of meetings and involves real negotiation and discussion to achieve the best outcome. There is a strong commitment by all parties to ongoing professional development including the positive impact of mentoring and coaching on the development of existing teaching staff. The partnership knows its schools and mentors very well, is able to match trainees to schools effectively and employs a practical, flexible approach to bring about improvements, particularly for individual trainees.
66. There is good evidence that effective action has been taken in strengthening the training for primary trainees, sharpening assessment against the QTS standards and improving professional studies for secondary trainees. These improvements have sustained the outstanding attainment of self-funded trainees and led to a gradual increase this year in the number of outstanding primary trainees. However, formal action planning is not as strategic, as well evidenced or precise enough in relating improvements specifically to outcomes for trainees.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Context

67. The University of Bedfordshire operates in partnership with nine further education colleges to provide in-service training for teachers and trainers from the post-compulsory sector. At the time of the inspection, some 600 trainees were enrolled on courses leading to the university-validated professional graduate certificate in education or the certificate in education. Both qualifications were endorsed by Standards Verification UK and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for further education teachers. Courses are designed for part-time attendance, on one day each week over two years. All trainees must attend two additional study days each year, designed to enable participants from all centres to work together in subject-specific groups. In-service provision at the university and across the partner colleges was evaluated.

Key strengths

68. The key strengths are:

- the thorough and consistent selection and interview processes, which carefully address the needs of individual trainees
- the highly effective training, which encourages trainees' independent learning and the development of reflective evaluation
- the good personal and academic support for all trainees, which ensures their progress from their individual starting points
- the strong enthusiasm for and the commitment of the partnership to effect continuous improvements which benefit trainees
- the partnership's positive approach to equality and diversity, which promotes inclusion and develops trainees' awareness of the diversity of the further education sector.

Required actions

69. In order to improve the quality of provision, the partnership must:

- improve the consistency of arrangements for monitoring the quality of mentors' contributions.

Recommendations

70. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the partnership should:

- further develop the use of e-learning and the virtual learning environment (VLE) within the programme to meet trainees' needs

- continue to develop and clarify the documentation used to track trainees' overall professional development
- ensure that all trainees embed equality and diversity within their planning for teaching and learning in order to prepare learners for the wider implications in the workplace
- refine the self-evaluation processes and documentation to be more focused and incisive
- embed strategic processes within the university to strengthen the coherence of overall planning to meet the demands of the wider further education sector.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

71. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees is good. Good training and assessment have supported an improving trend of high success rates across the partnership. Given their varied backgrounds and individual starting points, most trainees make good or outstanding progress and their attainment by the end of the course is at least satisfactory. There is no significant variation in attainment for trainees from ethnic minority backgrounds, or between male and female trainees.
72. Thorough and consistent recruitment and selection processes are applied across the partnership. Those trainees who do not meet the entry criteria are carefully guided to additional training or to more appropriate initial courses offered by partner colleges. The partnership is very responsive to demand at local and regional level, and has close links with voluntary organisations, local authorities and other employers which provide good opportunities for entry to initial teacher education by under-represented groups.
73. Most in-service trainees have a suitable range of teaching and learning strategies. The programme focuses very effectively on and encourages independent and collaborative learning. Well planned training and individualised learning develop trainees' confidence to experiment with new approaches. Submissions are related to workplace practice and add value through action research with a focus on self-evaluation and improvement. It is clearly evident, from trainees' assessed work, lesson observations and reflective logs, that trainees make significant progress and that they relate theory well to practice. Trainees also increase their awareness and understanding of other further education contexts through the well-regarded observation of their peers. Trainees know their own students well and have a good understanding of how to meet the needs of individuals and groups through a range of approaches. Weaker trainees do not always demonstrate within their planning for teaching and learning sufficient awareness of how to support the development needs of their learners in literacy and numeracy.
74. Trainees receive good personal and academic support which ensures they progress from their individual starting points and attain well. Tutors provide

strong and unstinting personal support for trainees, together with very detailed and constructive feedback on written submissions. Assessment judgements accurately reflect trainees' achievements across a range of activities; however, the university recognises that the tracking and recording of trainees' holistic development is not always sufficiently clear. Mentors provide good personal support for trainees within their teaching environment, as well as generally providing trainees with detailed advice on subject-specific pedagogy. The university recognises that the recording by mentors of subject-specific feedback and targets for improvement is not consistent across the partnership, and it is taking actions to improve the quality of its monitoring of mentoring arrangements.

75. Resources are generally good. Teacher educators are well qualified and very experienced, and the university provides good opportunities for the further professional development of college tutors, including participation in Master's degree programmes. Specialist speakers, from within the partner colleges and other universities, make useful additional contributions to the programme. Increasingly effective use is made of the two study days each year, which bring together all trainees to focus on key educational issues and share subject-specialist methodology. The university recognises that the current VLE does not fully meet all trainees' needs, and is working to develop new approaches to e-learning within the programme.
76. Partnership working is good. Frequent meetings, at differing college locations, of personnel from the university and colleges, focus carefully on identified areas for improvement in the programme. They also provide an opportunity to share good practice between individual partner colleges and the university. Systems for peer observation and review between tutors are in place to support improvements in the consistency of outcomes for trainees across the partnership. Effective module moderation meetings include checks on grading and assessment, standardisation and marking. Managers make effective use of external examiners' reports, and the regular feedback from trainees, to take actions for improvement wherever feasible. The partnership provides training for mentors, but not all mentors have received training or feedback to improve their mentoring skills or to share good practice.
77. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The inclusive approach of the partnership is reflected in the emphasis throughout the programme on equality and diversity, which is thoroughly embedded in all aspects of the training delivery. The open and supportive ethos of the partnership encourages in-service trainees of widely differing backgrounds and experience to participate fully. Trainees are clear on their entitlements within the programme. The partnership actively promotes teacher education to groups under-represented in teaching and training in the lifelong learning sector. Analysis of recruitment and attainment by different groups of trainees is satisfactory.
78. The in-service trainees generally have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and a clear commitment to equality and diversity. They take care to involve all learners in their own lessons. However, trainees do not demonstrate within their planning for teaching and learning, or in their teaching, that they have

given sufficient consideration to how they can prepare their learners for the implications of equality and diversity in the wider workplace. This aspect is not sufficiently addressed or monitored through observations within the programme.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality

Grade: 2

79. The partnership has good capacity to take those actions required to secure further improvements in outcomes for trainees. The university's leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining and developing high-quality teacher training in the post-compulsory sector, as part of the university's wider strategy for teacher education and the delivery of higher education. The post-compulsory provision is influential in meeting the training needs of the wider further education sector across the region.
80. Managers and teacher educators across the university partnership are dedicated to the continuous improvement of the programmes and there is a clear trend of improvement overall in trainees' progress and attainment. Since its establishment, the university has set in place new structures and systems to strengthen the programmes and to improve outcomes for trainees. Some of the more recently established management planning and review structures have yet to make their full contribution to the overall strategic planning for post-compulsory teacher education.
81. University quality assurance procedures are generally well embedded, with follow-up actions routinely taken to address issues arising from annual reviews and from external examiners' reports. The partnership has an increasingly detailed and accurate understanding of its key strengths and of those areas that require development. The wide range of quality assurance systems and procedures is inclusive of partners, staff, trainees and managers; however, mentors are less involved in these processes. Procedures include regular network meetings to moderate assessed work and to cross-mark submissions, together with joint observation and review processes shared by the university and partner colleges.
82. Self-evaluation is generally accurate in identifying strengths and areas for development although the assessment of performance and planning action for improvement are not as strong as the provider judges. Programme leaders clearly recognise the main strengths and areas for development which impact directly on outcomes for trainees. Action plans are clear and are monitored regularly, although they are not always expressed in terms of improving outcomes for trainees. Effective actions have been planned and implemented in many instances to address issues identified at the previous inspection. Self-assessment reviews within partner colleges are generally well established, but these reviews are not always used effectively in self-evaluation at university level. The university has collated information from individual college self assessments; however, the resulting self-evaluation document does not provide

a sufficiently focused analysis of the partnership's performance against key performance indicators that relate to outcomes for trainees.

83. Trainees' progress and outcomes are regularly monitored to identify inconsistencies in outcomes between partner colleges within the partnership. While success rates are now more consistent between colleges, retention and progression rates vary significantly between individual partner colleges, and between the two certificate programmes.
84. Trainees' views on centre-based training are gathered systematically after each module and through scheduled trainee consultative committee meetings. These views contribute to the evaluation of the training and often result in targeted actions which are clearly focused on improving outcomes for trainees. Trainees' views on the quality of mentoring support are less clearly evaluated, and mentors' feedback and views are not routinely gathered or evaluated. The partnership recognises that further actions are required to ensure the quality of its monitoring of mentoring arrangements. Further action is also being taken to gather information on former trainees' progress on completion of the programme at individual centres.
85. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of external changes and initiatives which impact on the programme. The university and its partner colleges work closely together to develop aspects of the programme in response to anticipated national and local initiatives. Expertise and intelligence from a wide range of external sources, including several Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training are routinely shared at university management meetings, principals' forums and the partnership network meetings. The network meetings are valued by partner colleges and well attended. Examples of effective actions taken by the partnership include its response to the challenges of the workforce reforms in further education and the introduction of professional formation and Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS). Recent trainees have already successfully completed their professional formation after completion of the programme and have now gained QTLS.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges:

- Barnfield College
- Bedford College
- Castle College
- Central Bedfordshire College
- Grantham College
- Leicester College
- North Hertfordshire College
- Oxford and Cherwell Valley College
- Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

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