

University of Chester

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Introduction

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

Key to inspection grades

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

Explanation of terms used in this report

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

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

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

The provider

3. The University of Chester Faculty of Education and Children's Services works in partnership with a range of schools to provide initial teacher education (ITE) leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the primary and secondary phases, and to qualified teacher learning and skills status (QTLS) in the further education (FE) phase. The primary phase of the university works in partnership with schools spread across six local authorities in the north west of England. It offers a four-year undergraduate course leading to a Bachelor of Education (BEd) and two one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses, one in primary education and one in education for Early Years. The Early Years PGCE course is based on the Warrington campus of the university. The university also offers ITE, leading to QTS, through the award of a PGCE in seven secondary subjects. The University of Chester works in partnership with Warrington Collegiate and West Cheshire College to deliver ITE for FE teachers and trainers, which leads to the award of certificate in education (CertEd). The award is endorsed by Standards Verification UK. The University has formal Partnership Agreements with each of the colleges and these are designated

'Associate College of the University'. The university validates the awards and has overall responsibility for the quality of provision.

A commentary on the provision

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

- High levels of academic and pastoral care for trainees which result in levels of achievement which are consistently at least good.
- Effective central and school-based training and very good use of school and college-based colleagues to deliver training.
- Very good use of resources to support training and promote good attainment.
- Planning for improvement is detailed and robust. Evaluation cycles are well established and result in improving outcomes for trainees.

5. There are particularly strong features in some programmes that could be applied to other programmes or aspects of the provision.

- The exceptionally detailed and accurate analysis of data to identify strengths, weaknesses and trends in the primary phase.

Provision in the primary phase

Context

6. The University of Chester Faculty of Education and Children's Services works in partnership with around 400 schools in six local authorities: Cheshire; Warrington; Halton; Wirral; Shropshire; and Manchester. It provides ITE in the 3 to 7 and 5 to 11 age ranges for both a BEd course and for postgraduate trainees. At the time of the inspection there were 345 trainees following the four-year BEd course (across all four years) and 44 on the one-year postgraduate courses.

Key strengths

7. The key strengths are:
- the innovative, determined and highly effective leadership and management of the primary phase with a clear focus on improving communication, strengthening partnership working and raising attainment
 - the very accurate and detailed collection and analysis of data to inform priorities and improve practice
 - the highly reflective trainees who demonstrate very good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of how pupils learn
 - very strong centre-based training from a highly effective and experienced team of tutors
 - robust and rigorous assessment procedures, resulting in most trainees making progress which is at least good
 - a rich and creative curriculum which offers trainees opportunities to immerse themselves in understanding the place of the child in the wider community
 - excellent use of resources, particularly the expertise to be found in partner schools and in the wider community.

Recommendations

8. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
- ensure improvement and action planning are more specific in linking outcomes for trainees to measurable criteria for success. Targets for improvements in attainment should reflect trainees' good and outstanding starting points.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

9. Provision across the partnership is of a consistently high quality. Trainees have an excellent understanding of the place of the child in the wider community and are exceptionally well prepared to teach. Schools and a broad range of partners are enthusiastically encouraged to contribute to a partnership which is dynamic, forward looking, and very receptive to suggestions for improvement. It prepares trainees very well for beginning their careers in teaching. Trainees say that they are confident and very well prepared to begin their teaching careers. This view is endorsed wholeheartedly by headteachers who say that newly qualified teachers from the University of Chester are not only of a high quality but are well prepared to quickly assume additional responsibilities.

10. Selection procedures are rigorous. Trainees describe a very comprehensive recruitment and selection procedure. Materials available to prospective trainees make clear the high aspirations and rigorous demands of the course. Applicants are under no illusions about the high levels of commitment required. Selection and interview procedures make good use of the experience and expertise of headteachers and members of the faculty to ensure the recruitment of high quality trainees. Interviews include a skills audit which is used very effectively to identify trainees' particular strengths and areas of weakness. This audit contributes to the trainees' individual training plan, which is a very good tool for providing additional support for areas of weakness, and extra challenge for those trainees with high levels of prior skill and experience. Useful constructive feedback is offered to unsuccessful candidates, who often reapply and are successful in securing a place. Trainees' progress against their individual targets is regularly monitored and discussed with them, resulting in excellent academic support on both the BEd and PGCE course. The faculty has been successful in attracting men onto the training courses, with a significant rise in successful applications for 2010/11. The faculty is committed to increasing the representation of minority ethnic trainees and has adopted a range of strategies, such as a targeted approach to recruitment and attendance at recruitment fairs in inner city areas, for example, Birmingham and Newham. So far these strategies have had little impact and in most years recruitment of minority ethnic trainees is 2-3% below the targets set for it but broadly in line with local demography. This target has now been reduced by 3% in recognition of the recruitment difficulties the faculty faces. Employment rates are high, with 93% of the most recent leavers who responded to the faculty's survey being employed as teachers.

11. Most trainees make good progress towards achieving the standards required for QTS and over time it is an improving picture. Over the last four years attainment has been consistently good, with a significant increase in the proportion of trainees graded as outstanding in 2010. The proportion of trainees judged to be satisfactory has been about 10% in three of the last four years, and stands at about 11% for the current cohort. The proportion of trainees judged outstanding this year rose by seven percentage points, to 55%. The faculty is committed to analysing trends over time, in order to ensure all trainees achieve as well as they can. Analysis of how well specific groups such as men and women, and those on different courses, progress is exceptionally thorough.

12. All trainees spoken with were confident and demonstrated very good subject knowledge. They are particularly well prepared to teach letters and sounds, (phonics), and information communication technology (ICT). The promotion of trainees' confident use of ICT to enliven their teaching has been a strength of the provision over a number of years. Trainees' confidence in teaching phonics is more recent, and gained in response to requests from trainees for more focused support. All trainees spoken with during the inspection felt they had a very good understanding of Every Child Matters and a clear picture of how children learn and develop in the community. Inspection evidence from discussions and an analysis of trainees' files and assignments confirms this view. Trainees are very well prepared to teach in culturally diverse communities, with one trainee describing in detail her work in educating pupils about the lives of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities.

13. The faculty has been proactive in ensuring that BEd trainees have experience of working in a range of school contexts and non-standard settings. These include: Children's Centres; Greater Manchester Police; City Learning Centres and a range of galleries and museums. The work with Greater Manchester Police to promote a greater understanding of community cohesion is particularly innovative and provides very good tracking of progress against some of the standards for QTS.

14. The quality of central and school-based training is outstanding. Both provide excellent breadth and balance and result in highly reflective, confident and enthusiastic trainees. Each programme builds on the professional skills and knowledge trainees have previously acquired. Training programmes are carefully designed and regularly reviewed. Excellent balance between university tuition and school-based training results in good cohesion between what trainees learn in lectures and workshops and their application of that learning in classrooms. This is in part because school placement handbooks are explicit about exactly what it is that trainees are expected to do on a week-by-week basis. It is also because communication across the partnership is very good. Recent changes to the partnership arrangements have resulted in a tangible sense of shared commitment and enthusiasm. All partners share a passion for enabling trainees to become skilled teachers. School-based partners say that members of the faculty are readily available and highly responsive to suggestions for improvement. Trainees also speak highly of the ease of communication with all members of the faculty and their quick and ready response.

15. The promotion of equality of opportunity and valuing diversity is good. Pastoral and academic support for trainees is very effective and is a significant contributor to high completion rates. Trainees with particular learning and other needs are well supported and case studies evidence a good range of support and good partnership working with outside agencies. There is a very effective compliance team and safeguarding officer, who have an excellent understanding of all aspects of safeguarding. Training for safeguarding is of high quality with all of those who interview trainees having certified attendance at safer recruitment training. While attainment is rising, over the last four years, not all trainees have achieved as well as they should. The proportion judged satisfactory has been about 10%.

16. Resources are used exceptionally well to enhance the quality of provision. Additional external funding is efficiently used, such as that provided to work with 12 schools as part of the leading literacy schools project, funding for the promotion of ICT control technology, and training for future primary teachers of modern foreign languages. Working with a wide range of partners to provide exciting complementary placements is a particular strength. Trainees speak with great enthusiasm about the significant impact the wide range of special projects have on their teaching. These include a creative arts project based on Chester the Giant City, Sing Up, and a focus on international practice, which saw a group of trainees travel to Finland. Communication across the partnership is enhanced by the easy to access virtual learning environment (VLE) which provides good information about what is happening in the university and beyond. It also provides a forum where trainees can ask questions and share experiences and a depository for lecture notes, teaching resources and 'top tips' which trainees share among themselves. Trainees also speak very highly about the wide range and ready accessibility of resources to help them in their teaching, such as science equipment and historical artefacts.

17. The faculty makes excellent use of experienced tutors from partnership schools to provide trainees with practical and up-to-date insights into important topics such as the teaching of mathematics and how to understand school attainment data. Trainees spoke with enthusiasm about a training session on the interpretation of 'RaiseonLine' data which was led by a headteacher. They also expressed an eagerness to learn more about how attainment data can be used to track and accelerate pupils' progress. All trainees, whether following the BEd or PGCE course, say that university tutors are inspirational and provide excellent individualised support and challenge. Tutors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They model best practice in their teaching, enabling trainees to experience and discuss a range of teaching strategies and decide which best meet the needs of learners. Trainees are very well prepared for their future careers. As one headteacher said of NQTs from Chester: 'They have the edge when it comes to professionalism and are ready to take on the challenge. They are very well organised and prepared.' Employment data indicate they are also much in demand.

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

18. Innovative and forward-looking leadership is securely based on robust and accurate self-evaluation. There has been a relentless drive for improvement and a significant rise in the proportion of trainees graded outstanding over the last two years. The key priority for the faculty was to strengthen the partnership through devolving responsibility to the point at which it could have greatest impact. This strategy has been highly successful. School-based mentors are now much clearer about their roles and are revelling in their new responsibilities. This has been possible because communication across the partnership is good, and priorities are agreed among all of the partners and widely shared. Mentors say they have been very well prepared to assume new responsibilities and that the support and professional development provided by the university is of a consistently high quality.

Data are used very effectively to analyse trends, identify strengths and weaknesses, and inform priorities for improvement. The collection, analysis, and use of data to inform improvements are detailed, accurate and exceptionally thorough. Programme leaders and others use self-evaluation very well as part of a comprehensive review cycle which involves all faculty staff, trainees and other partners. For example, trainees identified a need for more training in mathematics. This resulted in changes to training, additional workshops, and to more rapid progress. Trainees were particularly appreciative of the extra-curricular sessions which they say boosted their subject knowledge and confidence to teach mathematics. Currently, the two most important tools for strategic planning are the self-evaluation document (SED) and the annual monitoring review. These are used to inform the faculty improvement plan and action plans. Improvement planning is detailed and well informed by an analysis of outcomes that identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. Strategic planning would be improved further by ensuring that success criteria are more specific in linking actions to expected outcomes for trainees, particularly in respect of the anticipated impact on attainment. As part of its commitment to sustained improvement, the faculty is considering ways in which its self-evaluation cycle can be simplified.

19. Leadership across the partnership has an excellent capacity to anticipate change and respond to local and national initiatives. The leadership team has been at the forefront of developing the role of the partnership and refining the role of partner schools. Curriculum design is innovative and creative. The many wide-ranging partnerships greatly enhance trainees' understanding of cultural cohesion and 'the place of the child' within a wider view of society. Course modules looking at global dimensions help trainees appreciate the importance of learning within a national and international context. The opportunity for trainees to work with a school causing concern has provided valuable additional experience and provided good support within a local context. Trainees are very well prepared to teach phonics and cross-curricular ways of working. This not only prepares trainees very well but helps partner schools to keep abreast of developing practice and initiatives. One mentor spoke of the valuable additional expertise trainees bring to the school in areas such as the use of ICT and science.

20. The faculty has good improvement plans in place, with a clear focus on increasing the proportion of trainees judged to be outstanding. The provider's record of improvement since it was last inspected, coupled with dynamic and committed leadership and very effective management, result in an outstanding capacity to improve.

Provision in the secondary phase

Context

21. The University of Chester offers ITE leading to QTS, and the award of a PGCE in the following secondary subjects: art; drama; mathematics; modern foreign languages; physical education; religious education; and science. All courses cover the 11 to 16 age range with sixth form enhancement. At the time of the inspection there were 139 trainees on the secondary programme. The partnership includes around 85 secondary schools across the north west of England. These include 11 to 16 and 11 to 18 schools in both urban and rural settings.

Key strengths

22. The key strengths are:

- the good progress the trainees make, which is due largely to the excellent individual, pastoral and academic support they receive
- trainees' good understanding of whole-school issues, which is developed well by the effective professional studies course
- the range of good teaching skills, inspired by the enthusiastic and imaginative centre-based training
- trainees' up-to-date knowledge, which is due to their tutors' ability to anticipate and plan for change
- the development of trainees as reflective practitioners through the thoughtful design of the course and the challenging guidance they receive from their trainers
- the very well-conceived improvement plans, which have brought about considerable improvements in the programme and in trainees' achievement.

Recommendations

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

- ensure its data are accurate and used better to monitor and evaluate the course
- increase the numbers of trainees completing the course, particularly in mathematics and science
- avoid grading trainees too highly, midway through the course
- make sure that all schools used for the second placement are able to help trainees meet their targets.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

24. Most trainees make progress to become good teachers by the end of the course. The provider makes bold decisions in selecting some trainees to shortage subjects where recruitment has fallen recently to below target in some subjects. The number of trainees successfully completing the course has been below average, particularly in mathematics and science. According to the provider's own information, most secure teaching posts, despite a recent decline in employment opportunities locally.

25. Trainees enjoy all elements of the training thoroughly. It has several salient strengths. One is the tutors' evident enthusiasm for their subject, which rubs off on trainees. Another is the improved professional studies programme, which is now a much appreciated part of the course. This gives trainees a very good understanding of whole-school issues. Above all, trainees welcome the days spent at the university during the first placement, which provide much needed opportunities to 'recharge their batteries', and learn from each other and from their tutors in order to prepare for the next week in school.

26. A long established feature of the course is the subject enrichment week, which gives trainees exciting opportunities to develop skills in unusual settings. Religious education trainees, for example, gained valuable experience of teaching multicultural and multilingual classes in London, a valuable opportunity, given the lack of similar schools in the partnership. In physical education, trainees have developed skills in outdoor activities such as orienteering. Drama and art trainees have enjoyed stimulating projects in Venice and Prague, which, among other things, have enhanced their empathy with learners who speak English as an additional language.

27. The trainees have a particular strength in preparing lesson and medium-term plans. These are based on trainees' good understanding of how to ensure their pupils make progress in and between lessons. Trainees make innovative use of resources or introduce lessons in an imaginative way that captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm; for example, in mathematics one trainee used ancient Aztec codes to introduce a topic on algebra. These strong teaching skills are due to the enthusiastic and, in their own words, 'inspiring' teaching they receive at the university. They have good ideas about how to personalise learning to match the needs of individuals in their class, to a large extent because of the highly personalised approach to training adopted by the partnership. They are interested in and knowledgeable about Every Child Matters. For example, from an early stage in the course they learn about, and quickly become interested in, inter-agency working and the importance of the common assessment framework. Trainees receive a high level of pastoral and academic support and are extremely well organised. This can be seen in the systematic way they have arranged the key documents in their files.

28. Trainees' subject knowledge is generally good, though some specific aspects are weak in a small number of trainees; these include the second foreign language for someone on the modern languages course, or specific skills in one of the activity

areas in physical education. In mathematics, trainees' excellent subject knowledge results in imaginative approaches to teaching and very good planning.

29. Trainees make rapid progress because tutors' initial assessment of their strengths and weaknesses leads to individual training plans which are firmly based on their needs. For example, following their interview, those who need support are directed to subject enhancement courses in modern languages, science or mathematics. Some trainees are expected to spend time in different types of school if their prior experience suggests they would benefit. During the first days of the course, tutors make a more detailed initial assessment before setting individual targets for the term and deciding on the most appropriate first placement. Tutors also give trainees an initial attainment grade. This work is at a very early stage of development and some tutors are uncertain about its use, although programme managers recognise its potential for measuring the progress trainees make over the course.

30. Throughout the year, trainees receive very helpful feedback from tutors and mentors. They are set relevant targets and their progress towards them is closely monitored. Where relevant, these targets are specific to the subject they teach. For instance, in modern languages some trainees are expected to use the foreign language more in their lessons; in physical education, trainees have to develop their experience in specific activity areas. At the end of the first placement, further targets are set for trainees and they are given an interim grade. In some subjects these grades are unrealistically high, giving some trainees a misplaced confidence in their ability. With other trainees, it gives the erroneous impression of regression in the second half of the course.

31. The partnership with schools is strong. Subject mentors are well trained and provide valuable support for trainees. They receive ample relevant guidance and support from the faculty, with which they describe communications as excellent. This helps bring about a high level of consistency in the school-based training. The professional mentor has a much stronger role in assuring the quality of the school experience, a clear improvement since the last inspection. They routinely undertake paired lesson observations and critically scrutinise records of the mentors' work with trainees. The partnership uses the skills of their schools' staff most effectively; teachers, for example, often make valuable contributions to the course as visiting lecturers. Not only does this make for a very efficient use of resources, it also ensures that the training is highly practical and contributes to the good progress made by the trainees.

32. For most trainees tutors are able to provide a final placement that is well matched to the needs identified at the end of the first placement. For example, a trainee who needed to develop skills in managing challenging behaviour was placed in a school with classes that would give them the relevant experience and a mentor who would give them the support.

33. This closeness of match is not achieved in all cases. Modern language trainees needing to develop their ability to use the foreign language in lessons are not always placed in a school that can help them to do it. Physical education trainees do not all get enough opportunity to develop their skills in all activity areas. Sometimes a

mentor lacks the experience or skills to deal with the challenges presented by an individual trainee, or issues in the school create problems for the trainee. When faculty staff are made aware of this they usually act swiftly and effectively to remedy the situation. On occasion, however, the trainee is not provided with support and their progress is held up.

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

34. The provider knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It makes excellent use of a wide range of information to assess where it needs to improve. For example, the recent report of the chief external examiner recognised the potential for increasing the number of trainees who reach an outstanding level by the end of the course. Other sources of information include the regular surveying of trainees' responses to different elements of the training and the tutors' identification of specific QTS standards that need more attention.

35. While the evaluation of the programme is accurate and well focused on outcomes, some of the evaluations at subject level are too descriptive and provide insufficient analysis of the effectiveness or impact of the course. Managers' use of some types of data requires further improvement. The self-evaluation document contains figures relating to recruitment and retention which are inaccurate. The brief progress review in the programme's improvement plan uses unreliable data that give the misleading impression the course is deteriorating. The over-generous grading by some subject mentors at the end of the first placement limits the scope for managers to use this information for self-evaluation. Some end-of-course attainment data are not sufficiently well analysed to judge the relative performance of different groups, for example, to compare the performance of men and women or of minority ethnic trainees. Although the evaluation of the programme is sharp and focused on outcomes, some of the evaluations at subject level are too descriptive and provide insufficient analysis of the effectiveness or impact of the course.

36. The programme, despite its small size, draws on a wide range of expertise at the university and in partnership schools; courses are extremely up-to-date. This was evident in trainees' acute awareness of current matters. Trainees in religious education, for example, already knew about an Ofsted report on their subject even though it had been published less than a week before the inspection. The close collaboration of faculty and school staff and their shared commitment to continuous improvement mean that programme leaders are well placed to keep the course at the cutting edge of national developments.

37. Planning for improvement is excellent. The programme improvement plan accurately identifies the most important priorities for development. These are clearly and explicitly linked to the programme's self-evaluation. The overall aim is for excellence. The plan's objectives and success criteria are sharply focused on trainees' outcomes. Part of the plan is appropriately designed to improve specific QTS standards. The links between the programme plan and the subject plans are

strong and this helps ensure all partners are aware of the priorities and how to achieve them. Subject action plans are also focused on trainees' outcomes. An example is the religious education plan, which seeks to develop trainees' familiarity with different subject pedagogies.

38. This high-quality planning has helped to ensure rapid improvement in the programme since the last inspection. The previous report's points for action and consideration – the role of the professional mentor, the focus of improvement plans on outcomes, and the effectiveness of the professional studies course – have all been tackled very effectively. Furthermore, and more importantly, the provider's data show an improvement in trainees' attainment, and very recently in the numbers recruited to and completing the course.

Initial teacher education for the further education system

Context

39. The current CertEd programme was offered for the first time as a two-year, part-time in-service course on the Warrington Collegiate campus in September 2007 and as a one-year, full-time course in September 2009. West Cheshire College became an Associate College of the University of Chester in 2008, with the first part-time, in-service course being offered in September 2008. There are currently 68 trainees at Warrington Collegiate on the two-year, in-service programme and 48 trainees at West Cheshire College. There are 8 trainees on the pre-service, full-time programme at Warrington.

40. The number of male trainees has increased in 2009/10 and is now approximately half of the current year 1. Trainees studying at West Cheshire College will complete the full programme for the first time in June 2010.

41. The colleges also offer qualifications validated by a national awarding body which lead to Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector awards.

Key strengths

42. The key strengths are:

- good recruitment and selection procedures which support high quality outcomes
- high levels of personal and academic support which enable trainees to develop and use innovative activities in their lessons
- very effective and efficient use of resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for trainees
- constructive and extremely useful feedback to trainees following lesson observations and on assignments, which supports them in securing improvements in their teaching practice and in their academic writing
- rigorous planning for improvement by a senior manager resulting in higher outcomes for trainees
- thorough safeguarding policy and procedures which are highly effective in ensuring trainees have a very good understanding of procedures to safeguard learners.

Required actions

43. In order to ensure trainees are given every opportunity to progress and attain at the highest level, the partnership must:

- improve the measurement of trainees' attainment so that it is accurate.

Recommendations:

44. In order to improve the quality and consistency of the provision the partnership should:

- improve the quality and consistency of subject specific support by more systematic monitoring of mentoring across the partnership
- improve trainees' ability to promote learners' understanding and appreciation of social and cultural diversity
- use formal evaluations from employers to improve the provision
- integrate this programme more fully into the ITE provision of the faculty to facilitate better sharing of good practice.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

45. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is good. Inspectors agree with the partnership's self-evaluation that trainees' attainment is good and that trainees make good progress. They benefit from good support which boosts their self-esteem and allows them to have the confidence to use innovative activities in their lessons. Systems for monitoring trainees' progress and grading their achievement are relatively new and are not implemented fully across the partnership; however, the attainment grades available on inspection indicated that the assessment of attainment in relation to the professional standards is accurate. Milestone tutorials, a practice taken from other phases of ITE at the university, are popular with trainees and formalise the previously informal assessment of trainee's attainment.

46. Recruitment criteria are robust, clear and effective; in ensuring trainees have enough teaching experience, subject knowledge and the Skills for Life appropriate to complete the course. This has a positive effect on retention with over 90% of trainees progressing from year 1 to year 2. They are given pre-course tasks and graded at the beginning of the programme. Trainees are accepted on to the programme with and without a degree qualification but all have level 3 or above subject-competence skills and qualifications. Recruitment targets for CertEd are set as part of the operational planning process by the colleges; however, the partnership has a clear commitment to widening participation in the recruitment of staff and learners. A small number of trainees has been recruited from minority ethnic and disability groups and at West Cheshire College a high proportion, 29%, are recruited from areas of social disadvantage. There has been an increase in the number of men recruited. External trainees work for a range of organisations, including the National

Health Service, the police, a local private veterinary hospital, training consultants, an independent dance school and The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

47. Trainees make good progress and experience a broad range of learning groups. They develop good skills and strategies to manage behaviour. The high levels of personal and academic support enable trainees to develop and use innovative activities in their lessons. For example, in a fine art lesson, learners were using their understanding of the history of art and 'new wave' artists to produce booklets that held secret messages. In this lesson, food was used to colour and create unique and original backgrounds. Trainees' reflection shows insightful analysis. Trainees are able to confidently measure their own progress and their journey from the start of their course. However, across the partnership, target setting is used inconsistently to inform the trainees' individual learning plans and does not always identify deadlines and milestones sufficiently well.

48. Teacher-educators have high expectations of trainees and support them in their development with a strong focus on group discussions, relevant assignments, and peer observations. This has raised the standard of trainees' work with some judged to be outstanding. Peer observations are used particularly effectively to develop wider knowledge, understanding, and insight into the wider lifelong-learning skills sector. In one information technology lesson learners researched 'safeguarding on the internet for children' for a poster design they were preparing. This generated a lively discussion following the wide range of materials found available on the web.

49. Trainees benefit from the constructive and extremely useful feedback following lesson observations and on their assignments, which supports them in securing improvements in their teaching practice and positive development of their theoretical knowledge. Feedback from tutors and mentors is promptly provided and helpful in showing trainees how to improve. Observations by tutors are graded accurately, and action points for improvement are clearly identified. Although lessons by trainees are generally good and some are outstanding, a few trainees are not planning sufficiently well to meet individual needs of all learners. Trainees have a clear understanding of Every Child Matters and demonstrate this in their schemes of work and professional discussions.

50. Resources available to trainees are very good. There are excellent learning and training resources at the colleges. Teacher-educators are well qualified and act as very effective role models. At one college, each session taught by a teacher-trainer is evaluated by a designated trainee and their findings reported back to the whole group. At another college, where there are extensive building works being carried out, tutors have shown, by example, that it is possible to create an effective learning environment in a challenging situation. The college VLE is well used by trainees, especially the wide range of 'e-books'. Trainees and mentors have commented positively on the value of the revised handbooks. The colleges provide good additional learning support to meet trainees' individual needs. One example is the provision of effective early support for some trainees with their academic writing. All trainees have access to specialist support for dyslexia. The university provides a wide variety of professional developments for partnership staff including excellent training in safeguarding.

51. Subject-specific support by mentors is good. Mentors are committed and provide high levels of personal support. Mentors are well trained and provide a rapid response to trainees who are underperforming. However, the work of most mentors has not been monitored sufficiently closely and there is a lack of consistency in the support offered. Some trainees have the opportunity for informal developmental observations prior to formal observations. A few mentors have several mentees which can lead to pressure at certain times of the year.

52. Trainees are able to demonstrate good knowledge of the procedures to safeguard learners in their teaching sessions. Trainees feel safe and are secure in making declarations and reporting incidents. The faculty's assessment of the impact of its policies promotes further improvement. It organises 'safe to recruit' training for staff interviewing trainees, and has taken a lead nationally in organising conferences on safeguarding which academic and administrative staff, and outside speakers, attend. Most trainees have an awareness of social and cultural diversity and complete a module about contemporary issues which includes nine hours practice in another teaching environment. They then compare and contrast their experiences with that of their usual setting. Trainees are required to make a presentation on contemporary issues, and some of these are now being used for college staff development sessions. However, although trainees are able to confidently discuss social and cultural diversity, too few take opportunities in their lesson planning to develop their learners' understanding.

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

53. The partnership has a good capacity to take the actions required to secure improvements. Managers show a strong commitment to the promotion of high quality teacher education. Resources for the programme are excellent and are prioritised appropriately by management. The teacher training staff have a wide experience of teaching in this sector. Very good recruitment and selection have led to improvements in success rates.

54. Self-evaluation covers all aspects of the provision, and takes into account a wide range of evidence. It clearly indicates that the faculty knows the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. In partner colleges, self-assessment is very effective, accurate and strongly linked to improvement. The college self-assessments are used well in the preparation of the SED. To avoid duplication of work the format of the university programme monitoring documentation is to be reviewed in order to more closely align to the requirements of the SED. Self-evaluation places emphasis on the importance of feedback from the external examiner. The last full external examiner's report highlighted some significant issues but these were followed up immediately and approved by the next interim external examiner's report.

55. The enthusiastic ITE teaching and management team identifies priorities to bring about effective and continuing improvement. Trainers are well informed of developments in the sector and have ensured that they are compliant with equality and diversity and safeguarding legislation. Communication between placement

providers and the ITE team has improved. Curriculum managers in the colleges and mentors are very positive about their involvement in ITE. They are able to make clear links between the quality of the teacher training and the impact this has on teaching and learning.

56. The views of mentors and trainees are effectively used to contribute to the evaluation and improvement of the programme. Quality assurance surveys from colleges to obtain the 'learner voice' are evaluated thoroughly and used to bring about change. For example, in response to trainees' views, assessment methods have been changed to include more professional discussion rather than from written assignments alone. Additional individual support to develop academic writing skills is now available using the VLE. However, the collection and use of employer's views are not given the same priority across the partnership. A more formal partnership evaluation of all stakeholders' views is planned.

57. Senior managers have clearly demonstrated their ability to respond to national and local initiatives. Leaders have anticipated change in the sector well and demonstrated success by introducing changes across the partnership which have had a positive impact on improving the programme and trainees' practice. For example, a local initiative to increase the numbers of construction learners resulted in the recruitment of more trainees with this subject specialism. A one-year, pre-service programme has been introduced to enable trainees without teaching experience to gain a qualification quickly and find employment.

58. Action planning by the senior manager is rigorous. Links between self-evaluation and improvement planning are strong. Action plans are clear, incisive and monitored regularly; they link well to improving outcomes for trainees. The quality of specialist subject mentoring has improved significantly since the last inspection. Significant progress has been made in integrating the lifelong learning sector with the rest of ITE. College staff now have better professional development opportunities and are no longer working in isolation. They are starting to benefit from being in the partnership. However, some of the good practice seen in the rest of the faculty is not yet embedded fully in this phase. There is a need to continue to strengthen the links between the faculty and the partnership colleges.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership includes the following colleges.

Warrington Collegiate
West Cheshire College

Summary of inspection grades¹

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

Overall effectiveness

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

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

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

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

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