

The University of Bolton

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) inspection report

3–6 December 2012

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector in accordance with the *Handbook for inspecting initial teacher education from September 2012*.

The inspection draws upon evidence from the ITE partnership to make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the ITE partnership in securing high-quality outcomes for trainees.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is requires improvement; grade 4 is inadequate

	ITE for FE
Overall effectiveness How well does the partnership secure consistently high quality outcomes for trainees?	2
The outcomes for trainees	2
The quality of training across the partnership	2
The quality of leadership and management across the partnership	1

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Initial teacher education for the further education (FE) system

Information about the FE in ITE partnership

- The University of Bolton works with four partner colleges and one private training provider to offer one-year full-time pre-service, two-year part-time pre-service and two-year part-time in-service programmes. All lead to either a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education at Level 6 or 7 (M-level) or a Professional Diploma in Education at Level 5. All incorporate the requirements of the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. There are a number of pathways to the qualifications: generic pathways in a wide range of specialist areas and Skills for Life pathways in English (ESOL/literacy) and Mathematics (numeracy). The inspection included Skills for Life pathways taken alongside the general teaching qualification.
- The university and the training provider also provide Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector courses leading to University validated awards. These programmes were not included in the inspection.
- Trainees on the in-service programme are employed in a wide range of settings and specialist areas and teach at all learner levels. Pre-service trainees are allocated teaching placements in the partner colleges, in other local training providers and a range of other settings. The university only recruits trainees onto the pre-service programme where they are confident they can provide good quality teaching placements. These pre-service trainees also come from a wide range of specialist areas and work in specialist curriculum groups for parts of the training.
- At the time of the inspection there were 179 trainees on the pre-service route and 125 in the second year of the in-service route. Of these, 185 trainees were being trained in the university with the rest spread amongst the partners. The number of trainees on generic routes was 247 and on Skills for Life programmes was 57. There were also 118 trainees in the first year of the part-time in-service route: 100 generic and 18 Skills for Life, with 40 of these being trained in the university.

Information about the FE in ITE inspection

1. Inspectors undertook 19 observations of trainees' teaching. This sample included trainees from all routes and from all partners except Cirencester College. Current trainees and others who have recently completed their training programme were observed. Nine of these

observations were undertaken jointly with the trainee's mentor. Inspectors also held discussions with individual trainees and with five groups of trainees.

2. Inspectors held discussions with mentors, course tutors, senior leaders and managers in the university and from partner colleges and also from the training provider.
3. They looked at trainees' individual learning plans and other documented evidence. Inspectors observed a Skills for Life training session, taking the opportunity to talk with trainees about their training.
4. During meetings in the university and with partners, inspectors reviewed and discussed a wide range of documented evidence including the analysis of the outcomes for trainees and for groups of trainees, records of self-assessment and improvement plans.

Inspection Team

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Overall Effectiveness

Grade: 2

The key strengths of the FE partnership are:

- The outstanding leadership and management of the provision that have led to significant improvements in the quality of training and the outcomes for trainees, so that successful completion rates are high for all programmes and almost all trainees' teaching is good or better by the end of their training.
- The highly cohesive partnership where all partners contribute to outstanding leadership and management and the tight coherence between the elements of the course, resulting in the improvements in the quality of the provision and in the outcomes for trainees.
- The high-quality Skills for Life provision with more than half of trainees' teaching being outstanding by the end of the training.
- The high quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning that arises from detailed analysis of the outcomes for trainees, including the progress made by individual trainees and groups of trainees, and is focused well on securing further improvements to these outcomes.

- The close monitoring of the quality of trainees' teaching and the attention given to ensuring that individual and groups of trainees make at least good progress in improving their teaching.
- Arrangements for ensuring that all trainees have well-trained specialist mentors so that they receive the feedback and support they need to make good progress in improving their teaching.

What does the FE partnership need to do to improve further?

The partnership should:

- Increase the proportion of trainees whose teaching is outstanding by the end of the training by building on the high-quality practice that already exists within the partnership and the different programmes to:
 - support those trainees who require more help in transferring the lessons learned in training to their teaching, for example, in developing learners' functional skills
 - reduce further the variation in the quality of feedback and targets set for trainees
 - make sure that all trainees respond to these targets and that subsequent actions are monitored
 - provide all trainees with a good breadth of experience of different settings and working with a wide range of learners.

Inspection Judgements

The outcomes for trainees are good

5. The proportion of trainees successfully completing both the pre- and in-service programmes, and on all routes, is high; retention is high and all of those who complete the courses succeed. These high success rates, while previously high, have been improved further. The success rates are consistently high across all partners, training routes and for all groups of trainees. Whilst all are high, success rates for the Skills for Life trainees are even higher, sustaining the very good quality of this provision. Employment rates for pre-service trainees are also high. Many former trainees are employed in the partner colleges or with other local employers; their future destinations are tracked well. The training has a strong focus on developing the skills, understanding and qualities to ensure trainees' employability. The high success rates indicate that all trainees are on the programme most suited to their roles, needs and career aspirations.

6. Trainees' attainment is good and improving. By the end of the training, almost all trainees' teaching, for each of the routes, is good or better with significant proportions being outstanding. The teaching of around one in three of the trainees on the generic route and half of those on the Skills for Life routes is outstanding by the end of the course. The Skills for Life trainees generally have higher starting points. No teaching is inadequate. This high quality of teaching is consistent across the partnership, for each route and for different groups of trainees. The close monitoring of the quality of trainees' teaching shows clearly that all make at least good progress in improving their teaching.
7. Trainees' teaching demonstrates a range of strong features. They develop very good relationships with their learners to create a good working environment. They establish clear routines for their learners and set and maintain high expectations. They learn well from the training that emphasises the need to establish these routines early. This was demonstrated extremely well by a trainee teaching an outstanding dance lesson with learners arriving over an extended period as a result of transport problems; the speed with which these learners were integrated into the activity without any break in the flow of the lesson was impressive. Many trainees establish an excellent rapport with their learners, with a very good balance of 'being in control' with a relaxed manner and good use of humour. They are very supportive of learners, while being appropriately challenging, to enable at least good learner progress.
8. Trainees' planning is thorough and detailed; they know their learners well and planning generally takes good account of the needs of individual learners and identifies opportunities to develop learners' skills in literacy and/or numeracy. In an A-level psychology lesson, the teacher recognised weakness in students' ability to write essays and in coping with the statistical elements of research methods. She skilfully integrated both into work on explanations of eating disorders. Lessons are structured well with clear steps in learning and a good flow through the planned learning activities. All trainees in all areas demonstrate strong specialist knowledge and skills and apply this well and, through this, gain the confidence of the learners; they are very confident in modelling techniques and skills for the learners. They make imaginative and effective use of learning technologies, integrated well into the teaching and learning. In the best lessons, highly effective use is made of questioning to keep learners engaged and to develop their thinking; questions are directed well and trainees build on learners' responses to develop key teaching points.
9. Where current trainees' teaching is good, but not outstanding, extensive use is made of questioning but it is not sufficiently directed to engage all learners. Some trainees do not identify the timing when to move to independent learning, some leave it too late with too much 'teacher

talk', while others do not develop independent learning skills sufficiently. In some cases, trainees' good planning does not turn into good lessons; for example, in missing opportunities to develop learners' literacy and/or numeracy skills. Preparing trainees to develop these skills through their teaching is generally a strong feature of the training, and trainees value this training highly; however, a minority of trainees need more focused support in transferring this to their teaching. This is particularly about recognising where learners' skills in literacy and/or numeracy are a barrier to learning and developing these skills within the teaching of the specialist work.

10. Trainees are prepared well in promoting good attitudes to learning and encouraging learners' good behaviour through engaging and lively teaching, and many do this well. This was evident in a media and film session where the pace and variety of the work, together with the teacher's highly engaging manner ensured that all students were fully involved and working with enthusiasm. Some trainees cope extremely well with very challenging groups of learners, and receive good support from their mentors when necessary. They are also trained well in supporting the learning needs of a diverse range of learners, including for those learners with disabilities and/or those with additional learning needs; many do this well. The training is particularly effective in ensuring that all trainees have a full understanding of the complexities of this aspect of teaching. For some trainees currently on the courses, this enhanced awareness has also raised their concerns and these trainees report that they lack confidence. Trainers work hard to ensure that expectations at this stage of the course are realistic, especially for those trainees who have limited experience of this type of learner. Promoting equality and diversity was identified as a strength in the previous inspection report and many trainees do this very well, developing good relations between learners and groups of learners. In particular, Skills for Life trainees show good sensitivity to the diverse cultural backgrounds, ability levels and previous learning experience of their students, and include this carefully in their planning and preparation of sessions.

The quality of training across the partnership is good

11. The training prepares trainees to teach in the further education and skills sector well, and some aspects are outstanding. Improvements in the quality of training have led to marked improvements in the outcomes for trainees, particularly in the proportions whose teaching is good or better and in the proportion that is outstanding by the end of the training. While the training has significant strengths, there are a small number of areas where some inconsistencies in the quality of the training need to be resolved to improve further the quality of all trainees' teaching.

12. The excellent system for monitoring the quality of trainees' teaching throughout the courses is embedded well across all routes and across the partnership. The process is being continually reviewed to improve it yet further, but it has made a significant difference in improving the quality of trainees' teaching. It also provides information for tutors so that they can intervene and provide additional support for trainees where necessary, as well as identifying where the training needs some improvement. The assessment of teaching focuses sharply on nine aspects of teaching and learning to give a well-rounded view of the trainee, with a good focus on the impact of teaching on learners' progress. These aspects relate well to the *Professional Standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the further education sector*. The use of this process, together with high-quality training for all assessors, means that accurate and detailed evaluations are made of trainees' teaching. Extensive use of joint lesson observations ensures consistency in these judgements, although, at this time, there are no joint observations across partners, only for each partner with the university.
13. Analysis of the data arising from the sequences of observations of trainees' teaching show clearly that all are making at least good progress in improving the quality of their teaching. This judgement is supported well by inspectors' own observations. The analysis from each round of observations in the sequence show more trainees whose teaching is judged to be outstanding, more good and fewer whose teaching is not yet consistently good, with no inadequate at any stage. Skills for Life trainees tend to have slightly higher starting points, as indicated by more good or better for the first teaching observation, but the pace of improvement in their teaching is equally strong.
14. A particular strength of the provision is the focus on individual trainees. The initial assessment identifies any specific support needs well, and these are dealt with sensitively and effectively. The monitoring of trainees' teaching is focused very well on identifying individual strengths and priorities for development. Early observations of teaching include consideration of diagnostic issues together with other information from mentors and tutors and the trainee's own critical reflection and self-evaluation, and establish clear expectations for each trainee. Further observations monitor the progress of the trainees against these individual expectations. In the very large majority of cases this leads to good quality long-term developmental targets to improve teaching, balanced well with short-term targets that need to be addressed before the next observation. The targets are reviewed regularly, not least through frequent individual tutorials, and this leads to trainees making at least good progress against their targets. Much target-setting is of very high quality. Inspectors also observed some outstanding feedback to trainees from mentors following a joint observation with one of the

inspection team. In a small number of cases, the longer-term targets lack clarity or challenge. Also, a few trainees do not follow up these targets and take the actions required, or the targets are repeated. This is usually picked up through effective monitoring and dealt with promptly.

15. The individual learning plan works well in bringing together evidence to give a clear view of the trainee's progress and improvements in their teaching and to set developmental targets. While tutors work with trainees at the end of the training to set clear targets for further professional development beyond the training, this often does not involve their employers.
16. The various elements of the courses come together well to support trainees' progress and improvements in their teaching. Training sessions cover essential theoretical aspects of teaching and learning, and these are routed well in practice and applied to specialist areas. Trainees are required to think about the application to their teaching. Assignments also support this good coherence and have a good focus on applying what has been learned to trainees' planning, teaching and assessment of learning. There are also strong links between the more generic and specialist aspects of training. Good and often excellent collaboration between tutors and mentors supports trainees well in improving their teaching. There is a high quality team of tutors in the university and across the partnership who are specialists in teacher training and in their particular curriculum areas. These tutors have a good understanding of further education and skills and the breadth of the sector.
17. All trainees have a mentor who is a specialist in their area or in one that is very closely aligned. All mentors are trained well in the role and are not allowed to take on the responsibility without this training. The university uses a mixture of group, one-to-one and online training to ensure all have this training. In addition, any mentors who have not undertaken the role for three years have to go through the training process again. Very good monitoring and quality assurance procedures mean that senior leaders know where additional support is required and mentors receive clear feedback on the quality of what they do.
18. There is some variation in the extent to which trainees are given a good breadth of teaching experience during the course. While recognising that this is much easier to arrange for those on pre-service programmes than it is for those who are in-service, more trainees should be given this opportunity. Some trainees have very good experience of working with learners at different levels and in other settings. Others work with a range of learners, but do not always have any experience in other settings. All trainees are encouraged to at least observe a wide range of

lessons to give greater awareness of this breadth, but the extent to which they do this is inconsistent.

The quality of leadership and management across the partnership is outstanding

19. Outstanding leadership and management have contributed to the improvements in the quality of training that have resulted in marked improvements in the outcomes for trainees. The provider has outstanding capacity to improve further. Leaders within the university have a clear vision for the further development of the partnership and communicate this well; they drive improvement relentlessly. This is an extremely strong and cohesive partnership. Well-structured leadership at all levels across the partnership ensures good communications and decision making. Monthly partnership meetings and an annual review mean that all partners have a deep and accurate understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved, as well as being closely involved in review and decision making. High aspirations and expectations are shared across the partnership. Underpinning this is an absolute commitment to striving for excellence and continuous improvement in the provision to improve further the outcomes for trainees.
20. The provision meets well-defined local and regional needs very well, including raising awareness and providing opportunities for people from a wide range of backgrounds to become teachers in the sector. The university has responded quickly and effectively to the demand for teachers to be able to combine English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and literacy teaching. A new programme has been introduced to address the teaching of learners with additional learning needs. The specialist curriculum groups are continually reviewed to ensure that they meet needs well. There are very good procedures to ensure that trainees are on the most appropriate course and that they have the skills, understanding, experience and qualities necessary to be successful.
21. Improvement planning is based on the rigorous, accurate and systematic analysis of internal and externally validated qualitative and quantitative data, thorough self-evaluation and a wide range of evaluative feedback involving all partners. Self-evaluation is accurate and firmly rooted in the widespread and rigorous analysis of the outcomes for trainees as well as evidence from external examiners' reports, surveys of trainees' views, evaluations of each module, and the constant review of processes and procedures across the partnership. The performance of trainees and groups of trainees is monitored extremely rigorously from the start of the course to final assessment to ensure that almost all become at least good teachers by the end of their training. A particular strength is the

analysis of information about how well individual trainees progress against individual expectations to support the analysis of data about the outcomes for all groups of trainees. The priorities for improvement stem from this systematic and robust analysis and are sharply focused on improving the outcomes for trainees. These priorities are well understood across the partnership and partners understand their role in securing improvement.

22. Rigorous quality assurance systems ensure that there is consistently high quality across the partnership and also ensures that developments and improvements are embedded in practice. There is high-quality and well-focused professional development to ensure that mentors carry out their role well. Where the training is not of the quality expected, this is identified and further actions planned and undertaken with close monitoring through the impact on trainees' progress and teaching. The close analysis of trainee progress data, arising from frequent and systematic observations of their teaching, provides excellent monitoring of the quality of the provision and quickly identifies where support or improvement is needed. Leaders across the partnership, and especially within the university, are fully aware that there is still work to be done, but they know exactly where and what is required. As a result the quality of training across the partnership is consistently good and improving, and some aspects are outstanding, leading to marked improvements in the outcomes for trainees.

Annex: Partnership colleges

The partnership with the university is based in:

Bolton Community College
Bury College
Cirencester College
Salford City College
Skills Solutions (Manchester)

ITE partnership details

Unique reference number	70151
Inspection number	398732
Inspection dates	3–6 December 2012
Lead inspector	James Sage HMI
Type of ITE partnership	HEI-validated provision
Phases provided	FE and skills
Date of previous inspection	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70151
Previous inspection report	
Provider address	The University of Bolton Deane Road Bolton Lancashire BL3 5AB