

University of Leicester



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A primary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Leicester works in partnership with around 130 schools to provide a one-year PGCE with qualified teacher status (QTS) for the 3-7 age range and the 5-11 age range. At the time of the inspection there were 111 trainees.

Context

The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors in accordance with the *Ofsted Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training (2005-2011)*.

This report draws on evidence from a short inspection of the provision and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

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

Main inspection judgements

Management and quality assurance: Grade: 2

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the ITE Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the university's well-deserved reputation for training high quality teachers
- the very good selection procedures and subsequent recruitment of high calibre trainees
- the implementation of good systems to develop trainees' subject knowledge and to track their progress
- the good support provided by university tutors, visiting tutors and staff working in partnership schools
- the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the training programme
- management and leadership at subject and curriculum strand level.

Points for action

- improving the quality of long-term planning.

Points for consideration

- improving the quality and consistency of tutors' marking
- ensuring that trainees are fully aware of the Every Child Matters agenda and how it is delivered successfully in schools.
- improving consistency in the quality of mentor support

The quality of training

1. The quality of the training has been maintained at a good level since the last inspection. As a result, trainees meet the Standards for QTS and are well prepared for teaching pupils across their chosen age ranges.
2. The structure and content of the training are good and meet the Requirements fully. The training programme is cohesive and provides a coherent learning experience for the trainees. It is regularly updated to include current national strategies and initiatives such as the Rose Report on the teaching of early reading skills. There is a good balance between centre-based and school-based training.
3. All elements of the course combine well to secure trainees' progress towards the Standards. The integration of ICT throughout the areas of study is a strong feature. Documentation is presented clearly and is often referenced to the appropriate Standards. Assignments and directed tasks are aligned purposefully to school-based experiences. They are well planned and demand an increasingly sophisticated level of reflection from the trainees as the course develops.
4. University tutors are highly experienced and the training programme is enhanced further by additional expertise from outside the university. The enthusiasm of the centre-based and school-based staff is reflected in their high level of commitment to supporting and developing the trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards. Tutors model good primary and early years practice. For example, a strong emphasis is placed on encouraging trainees to adopt a practical approach to planning the curriculum, particularly in science and mathematics. Trainees are very enthusiastic about the training and are well motivated to become good practitioners.
5. The programme is constructed carefully to meet trainees' individual needs right from the start. Pre-course tasks and a teaching placement prior to the start of the course provides trainees with a firm and common foundation on which to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that trainees' subject knowledge is secure. The various subject audits, combined with the information already gathered during the interview process, informs the type and level of support that trainees require. For example, trainees develop their knowledge and understanding successfully by making presentations to their peers on aspects of science in which they lack confidence. This is good practice and encourages them to want to develop to their full potential. In ICT, the trainees undertake an audit on entry and this is revisited three times a year. Tutors use the data to inform revisions to future training sessions.
6. The professional studies and the 'connecting the curriculum' strands are well designed. They provide trainees with additional stimuli and a broader platform from which to increase their knowledge of child development and their understanding of important professional issues. The 'connecting the curriculum' strand also covers the Foundation subjects and assists trainees to make links between subjects and adopt a thematic approach to learning. Currently, the Every Child Matters agenda is

underdeveloped in the training and trainees lack a full understanding of how this is delivered in primary schools.

7. Trainees' progress is monitored well against the Standards through close tracking of their strengths and areas for development at set points throughout the course. Assessment of assignments is rigorous overall but there are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking by tutors. Final report forms are linked well to the Standards with clear judgements on how well the trainees are meeting them. The trainees' professional action plans and their professional development portfolios provide good evidence of their progress towards and achievement of the Standards.

Management and quality assurance

8. Since the last inspection a new course leader has been appointed and a new senior management group has been convened. The leadership team has successfully managed revisions to the programme so that trainees will graduate with one of two awards; either a postgraduate certificate of education award with QTS or a professional graduate certificate in education and QTS.

9. The university has a strong reputation for the good quality of its teacher training provision and receives far more applications for places than are available. It is very successful at selecting those trainees who have the capability to meet the Standards and achieve QTS. Withdrawal rates are low. This is because the university has developed a rigorous and efficient selection process that not only fully meets the Requirements but also challenges applicants to demonstrate their commitment and desire to qualify as a teacher. The interview process and information about the course are described clearly in the university's attractive and well designed prospectus and explained in even greater detail on the university's web site. There is an obvious strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. For example, while the university has been successful in its efforts to attract applications from under-represented groups, such as males and those from minority ethnic groups, it has identified that some trainees from particular groups do not do as well as others. Consequently, the course leaders are becoming increasingly vigilant at identifying trainees at risk sooner and providing the support necessary for them to succeed.

10. The university works closely with partnership schools. The partnership agreement meets the Requirements fully. It sets out clearly the expectations of all parties and explains the benefits of partnership. The partnership steering committee provides a useful and successful forum for school staff to consider developments to the training programme. However, the low attendance overall by headteachers reduces the committee's potential and effectiveness of being an even more powerful means of driving improvement.

11. University-based training for visiting tutors and school mentors is organised well. Training is provided before each teaching placement and sensibly informs members of staff of changes and developments that have taken place, such as the

introduction of the recently revised new Standards. It also explains mentors' specific responsibilities in supporting trainees during the forthcoming school experience. Not all mentors attend training events and this leads to inconsistency in the level of support offered by mentors.

12. There is good communication between all partners. Tutors' quick response to phone calls and emails is appreciated by school staff. Their regular and frequent visits to trainees during school placements contribute significantly to the success of the partnership.

13. Self-evaluation is detailed and organised well. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of the training programme are rigorous and well-established. There are good external examiner arrangements. Their detailed reports provide valuable feedback to the course leadership about aspects of the programme. This feedback includes assessing the arrangements for and the quality of trainees' marked assignments.

14. Each year the quality assurance consultant draws all the course evaluations together into a detailed and useful evaluative report. The course management group make good use of the report to monitor actions in the improvement plan and to identify future course development. However, the current improvement plan is a relatively short-term document that only looks forward into the next year. There is little indication of the partnership's long-term vision and the success criteria are not sufficiently measurable to enable the course management group to monitor and evaluate progress effectively.