

# George Abbot Partnership

## Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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Provider address	George Abbot school Woodruff Avenue Guildford Surrey GU1 1XX
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Inspection dates	22-26 June 2009
Lead inspector	Alan Marsh 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

## The provider

3. The George Abbot School Partnership consists of ten partner schools which seek to meet local secondary teaching recruitment needs by training graduates through the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). It is located in and around Guildford, Surrey. The region is one of considerable affluence, with small pockets of deprivation; housing costs are high, and migration into the area by qualified teachers is very low. All core subjects are in short supply in local secondary schools. Over the last eight years the partnership has successfully trained more than 100 secondary teachers; most continue to work in schools in Surrey, and many are now in promoted posts of responsibility. At the time of inspection, there were fifteen trainees, all of whom were fully funded.

### Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:

- outstanding recruitment and selection arrangements and attention to the individual training needs of trainees
- excellent training, mentoring and moderation of mentors and tutors in partner schools, together with outstanding use of subject lead mentors to extend subject knowledge and understanding
- excellent use of resources to support all aspects of training

- highly effective response to local recruitment needs
- robust quality assurance and adaptability of the partnership in response to evaluations by partners and trainees
- clear and ambitious vision for further development.

## Recommendations

5. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment the provider should:
  - ensure that all trainees reach their full potential by monitoring their progress more systematically, thereby setting and modifying personal targets which impel them to attain to their maximum
  - review the nature, timing, and purpose of the second and other school placements and visits in order to broaden further trainees' experiences of more diverse educational settings.
6. In order to secure further improvement the provider should:
  - be more pre-emptive in anticipating change in national policy and practice, in order to ensure that trainees are fully prepared to work in a constantly evolving sector.

## Overall effectiveness

Grade: 2

7. Overall effectiveness is good. Trainees' attainment by the end of the programme is good, with more than three-quarters of them achieving the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) at a good or outstanding level. Retention rates are high, with no more than one or two trainees each year failing to complete the course; none of those completing fail to qualify as a teacher.

8. Trainees across the partnership develop particular strengths in a wide range of attributes and skills, including excellent rapport and professional relations with both children and colleagues in schools. They become astute and reflective practitioners, able to review their own classroom practice with an insightful eye on how they might teach even more effectively. Over time, they assume confident, authoritative management of space, time and behaviour, so that their classrooms or workshops become purposeful, well-ordered environments for enjoyable learning. The training they receive encourages them to take risks and be innovative in their teaching, as well as giving them a plethora of ideas and strategies to deploy. For example, two observed trainees made skilful use of 'concept snowballing' in their lessons, a technique for the dynamic exchange of ideas between groups of pupils that was great fun, highly efficient and wholly inclusive. Trainees' subject knowledge and pedagogy are well supported and extended by mentors in schools and by the lead subject mentors appointed by the partnership.

9. A few trainees develop less well their strategies for continuous formative assessment and for differentiated learning. Statistical information is not well used by all trainees to inform them of pupils' individual progress.
10. Arrangements for the recruitment and selection of trainees are comprehensive and contribute significantly to trainees' progress and attainment. The provider ensures that trainees understand the highly intensive nature of the training route they are proposing to undertake, and it examines their commitment, aptitude and attitude, scrutinises their subject knowledge and assesses their potential rigorously. A series of pre-course tasks enables trainees to establish a strong contextualised foundation for their impending studies; but an opportunity is missed to adapt these tasks to trainees' individual needs and so make even better use of their preparatory time.
11. Having met its targets for recruitment in previous years, in 2008/09 the provider was unable to fill all its allocated training places; it has taken steps to ensure that this situation is rectified in 2009/10, and has already offered all its allocated places to new recruits. Recruitment from under-represented groups is significantly higher than the demographic proportions within the local population from which it draws the overwhelming majority of its applicants. Almost all trainees secure a teaching post on completing the course, often within one of their placement schools.
12. Most trainees make good progress through the course from starting points of high aptitude and potential; a small minority exceed expectations and make outstanding progress and a few struggle with the intense demands of the course and make only satisfactory progress. All elements of the course combine very well to support the progress of trainees whatever their rate of development. The provider sets high expectations and elicits from trainees an ardent ambition to fulfil their potential; but these expectations are tempered with realistic and frequent evaluations of how well trainees are responding to what is asked of them. In the few cases in which trainees appear not to be thriving, the provider intervenes with sensitive and constructive support. This individual tailoring to trainee's needs of both support and challenge is a considerable strength of the partnership, made possible in part by the thorough knowledge that the provider has of the nature of its partner schools and the personnel within them. Mentors monitor the development of their trainees towards becoming effective teachers in a personally dedicated and professionally assiduous way, conducting an almost continuous critical dialogue with them about how their classroom practice is developing. This exceptional personal support for trainees extends to fostering their individual character and style as classroom practitioners, and so models the best practice of how they should teach.
13. Very thorough audits of trainees' skills and subject knowledge inform individual training plans and establish the basis for trainees' work in placement schools. These plans are very well used by most mentors to monitor their trainee's development and review their progress meticulously against the Standards. Interim reports are produced at four formal assessment points through the year, summarising how well trainees have developed against each QTS Standard and what

they still need to do to improve. However, these reports vary in detail and function. Consequently, although the large majority fulfil their potential, trainees' progress can not systematically be compared across all partner schools and a few trainees do not make optimum progress.

14. Resources are deployed very well to ensure that trainees gain as much as they might from their training. Human resources are highly accessible and unfailingly generous at all levels, from punctilious administrative support at the lead school through the course leader and link tutors to the school mentors and professional tutors. In all partner schools, subject departments embrace a shared responsibility for training. Well balanced decisions are taken between competing priorities for the allocation of resources, which is highly responsive to need. Many trainees make excellent personal use of the individually delegated portion of the training grant to augment their experiences. The provider has advanced plans for further development of the virtual learning environment and from September 2009 will make use of a dedicated teaching and learning laboratory.

15. All partner schools embrace wholeheartedly the ethos, protocols and shared sense of purpose of the partnership. Communications are excellent. There is a high level of transparency and consistency in all processes that realise the training, but individual flexibility of interpretation and implementation at school level is encouraged and it is in those differentiated environments that trainees flourish. The two main school placements are complementary, although most are of limited cultural or social contrast to the main placement; liaison between them is usually effective in advancing trainees' development. Mentors are very well briefed and trained in their roles, and they give unstintingly of their skills, experience and time. Whenever a concern is raised about a trainee's progress, the provider responds promptly and effectively to make available all necessary support and most problems are resolved.

16. The promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity is good. Trainees feel secure to report any concerns to the provider and no incidents of unfair discrimination or harassment have been reported in the last three years. Trainees are provided with several opportunities to experience some aspects of multi-cultural or multi-linguistic learning. However, more might be done to expose trainees to even more diverse educational settings and thereby to enable them to extend their pupils' awareness of a highly complex society.

**The capacity for further improvement  
and/or sustaining high quality**

**Grade: 1**

17. The partnership is a tightly knit family of schools which derive mutual benefit from their participation in training. It is within this context of shared responsibility that exceptionally rigorous, bold and continuous quality improvement takes place. The provider has successfully nurtured a holistic approach to employment-based teacher training. Consequently, placement schools readily embrace the notion that the responsibility for a trainee's development resides with the school as a whole and

not just the subject department. Trainees speak with pride and passion of how well they have been welcomed into the full life of the school, often being given well-judged responsibilities and opportunities beyond their initial expectations. The provider, through the role of the link tutor, keeps a canny eye on the advantages and possible perils of such an approach. Schools take great pride in their involvement in the partnership and contribute well beyond their attributable fiscal benefit. All possible indicators, from analyses of trainees' progress and attainment through the critical debates held by the programme management group and the detailed insights offered by external moderators and assessors to the personal views of mentors and trainees, inform how the partnership evaluates its provision through the annual review cycle. The provider acknowledges that its capacity to quantify and analyse trainees' progress is still under development, but much has been done already to use the data emerging from these quarterly assessment points to infer relative rates of progress against each Standard.

18. The final summary self-evaluation report does not do full justice to the comprehensiveness of the underlying processes. However, the multiple layers of quality assurance combine to provide a securely consistent operation across all participating schools and have ensured that over several years the overwhelming majority of trainees have achieved high-quality outcomes. Aspects of the provision which materially affect the quality of outcomes for trainees, such as the principles underpinning recruitment and selection and the distribution and accessibility of resources, are regularly reviewed and this is acted upon, so building a successful history of continuous improvement.

19. The link tutor plays a vital role in ensuring consistency of provision by moderating assessments made by the subject mentor and professional tutor and quality assuring their work. In turn, the link tutor's work is quality assured by the external consultant and external examiner. All are clear about their roles, and all provide very helpful reports the principal focus of which is the progress and attainment of trainees. However, an opportunity is missed to involve the external consultant more in the strategic planning of the provision.

20. The partnership has benefited from very energetic and committed leadership since its inception, and this continues under a new course director. Management of the course is very efficient and provides trainees with an exemplary model for the organisation of complex teaching and training processes the primary focus of which is always how well people learn. As different issues and needs arise that affect the training, the partnership reacts very well in taking initiative to improve trainees' progress and attainment. For example, in recent years both the link tutor role and the dedicated lead subject mentor role have been developed in response to perceived need. Mentors and trainees past and present comment very favourably on how well the course has been adapted over time, having an incremental impact on the overall quality of training. Some of the adaptations, such as the design of the subject enhancement programme, have been particularly creative in the way they have overcome long term obstacles to progress.

21. The partnership has a declared commitment to anticipate and meet local recruitment needs in schools, and in that respect it has had outstanding success.

Former trainees have an excellent record of employment in local schools, and many have achieved rapid promotion therein. A good number have enthusiastically taken on the role of mentor to subsequent trainees. The partnership's anticipation of change at a national level and its preparation of trainees for working in a constantly evolving sector are less well developed. For example, inspection exposed that few current trainees have a secure knowledge of the particular impact of changes in the 14-19 curriculum, including the new diplomas, on their own subject, and a small minority had a parochial view of the equality and diversity agenda.

22. At every level, members of the partnership contribute very effectively to improvement planning. Annual reviews are comprehensive and identify precisely strengths and relative weaknesses, resulting in annual adaptations to the programme; this prompts constant refinements, as previous trainees attest. It is evident that under a new course director the partnership will continue to plan for yet further refinements in order to ensure that all trainees attain to their maximum potential. The three-year development plan sets high expectations and has clear and appropriate priorities and the linked annual action plan is thorough and realistic. Areas for improvement identified at this inspection were already identified by the partnership as aspects of provision they wished to review further, and the partnership has already made considerable inroads into the challenging task of analysing, assessing and measuring trainees' progress through the course in the absence of any nationally agreed qualitative measures. The partnership has very close relations with a neighbouring employment-based training provider, and they compare the nature and quality of their provision with each other on a regular basis. With a very strong track record of effective action planning and implementation to date, together with boundless collective ambition, the partnership has an outstanding capacity for yet further improvement.

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

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

### Overall effectiveness

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

### Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

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

<sup>1</sup> 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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