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A further education teacher training inspection report 2006/07

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The inspection

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education (FE) teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004. It was conducted in two phases by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist Additional Inspectors. During the first phase, which took place in November 2006, inspectors focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievement of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. In phase 2, which was completed in June 2007, they also gained further insights into the provision.

Background

2. The University of Derby offers a full-time pre-service post graduate certificate in education (PGCE), based at the university. In the year of inspection 41 trainees were enrolled on the pre-service course. It also offers a part-time in-service certificate in education (Cert Ed), which is offered in two separate faculties and locations of the university and at four colleges of further education. In the year of inspection, 162 trainees were enrolled on the part time course. The colleges have responsibility for the delivery and resources of their own provision and the university retains overall responsibility for quality assurance and academic standards. The courses are endorsed qualifications and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for further education teachers.

Effectiveness of provision

3. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees have strong professional values and demonstrate good practice in teaching their subjects. They are committed to raising the achievement of their students. Module design and delivery includes a clear focus on diversity and inclusion and on developing reflection and self evaluation as a means of improving teaching and learning. Assignments provide very good opportunities to integrate theory with practice and to encourage valuable active research by trainees. Pre-service trainees receive very effective generic and specialist subject mentor support and their mentors have good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, the provision of specialist subject support for in-service trainees is less effective and the consistency of the mentor support they receive is less consistent. The opportunities for pre-service trainees to gain experience of teaching in different contexts, including group size, level and age range, are good. However, the opportunities for in-service

trainees to gain experience of a broad range of provision are less well developed. Good partnership relationships result in the sharing of good practice within the partnership and in effective collaborative activities. Quality assurance of the training provision and of assessment is at least satisfactory and often good; however, quality assurance of in-service subject mentoring support is weaker. The partnership is very responsive to internal and external evaluation and engages in timely and very effective improvement planning.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' good subject knowledge, which enhances their confidence in delivery
- clear focus on diversity and inclusion as a result of module design and delivery which raises trainees' awareness of equality and diversity
- quality of teaching and the consistent modelling of good practice in training sessions
- assignments that provide very good opportunities to integrate theory with practice and encourage valuable active research by trainees
- strong focus on developing reflection and self evaluation as a means of improving teaching and learning
- good partnership relationships that result in sharing of expertise and collaborative practice
- prompt and effective responses to issues arising from internal and external evaluation.

Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- the consistency of mentoring and specialist subject support for in-service trainees
- the opportunities for in-service trainees to gain experience of a broad range of provision and to engage in subject development

- the extent to which the value of individual learning plans to the learning process is made explicit and fully embedded in the training programme
- the effectiveness of mentor training in ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly and confidently understood by all.

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

Achievements of trainees

4. Trainees are enthusiastic, have high expectations of students and are committed to meeting their needs. They demonstrate strong professional values and attitudes both in their support of, and empathy for, students and in their interactions with other staff. All trainees engage in reflection upon and evaluation of their own teaching. In-service trainees, in particular, value the opportunity the course gives them to reflect on their approaches to teaching and learning and how they might improve. Trainees make good use of the feedback they get from lesson observations to improve areas of weakness, for example in making their teaching more student centred, in giving constructive feedback and in responding effectively to challenging behaviour.

5. In relation to their prior attainment and experience, both pre-service and in-service trainees make good progress in their teaching capabilities. They are committed to their own professional development and are willing to explore new ideas. They often attend in-house training sessions provided by their placement organisations and workplaces and identify clear objectives for their future careers.

6. Trainees have good subject knowledge, which enhances their confidence in delivery. They are aware of pedagogical knowledge and use this well in their approach to teaching different groups of students at different levels and in different contexts.

7. Lessons are well planned and resources are well prepared. Trainees set clear objectives and use a range of teaching and learning approaches to engage students and promote learning. In the best lessons, trainees make effective links with prior learning, make good and selective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to engage students, deliver lessons that have good pace, are confident in their explanations and engage in effective questioning. Skills for life trainees create good rapport and establish secure classroom environments that build confidence in their students. However, weaker trainees miss opportunities to involve students more effectively and use questioning that does not sufficiently challenge all students. A small

minority of in-service trainees have little opportunity to use ICT in their teaching.

8. The extent to which trainees take into account individual students' needs is good. For example, in an art class, a pre-service trainee planned different approaches to suit individual students' different stages of development. Trainees are able to organise their classes confidently and safely, for example, an in-service trainee gave sensible and practical focus to health and safety issues in an ICT class. Skills for life trainees demonstrate skilful management of classroom behaviour for students with complex behavioural issues. Most trainees are able to manage their classes effectively, although for the weakest trainees, low level disruption is not effectively challenged.

9. Trainees make good use of formative and summative assessment in their teaching and maintain clear records of both. Skills for life trainees engage in thorough initial needs assessment, target setting and recording of their students' progress and an in-service ICT trainee devised a learner tracking record to allow her to monitor and record the progress of a very diverse group of mature students. Trainees regularly plan opportunities for formative assessment in their lessons and engage in good on-going monitoring of students' progress during lessons. Good examples were evident of some trainees encouraging their students to engage in self-assessment as a way of raising achievement. The quality of oral and written feedback is at least satisfactory and often good. For example, written feedback on coursework by a business and management trainee was detailed, critical and helpful in guiding the student on how to improve.

10. Trainees are fully aware of the importance of equal opportunities and of ensuring that all students are supported appropriately. They are responsive to, and supportive of, students' individual needs and lesson plans reflect this. For example, in a class taught by a pre-service trainee, strategies were planned to ensure a learner with Asperger's syndrome and another with very high ability would be fully involved and challenged. However, a small minority of trainees are too focused on the requirements of their courses and do not routinely plan to meet individual needs. Where relevant, trainees communicate effectively with support assistants to plan their contribution to lessons.

Quality of training

11. The structure and content of both the pre-service and in-service courses are good and are designed to ensure that all trainees meet the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teaching qualifications. The content is clearly focused on the needs of teachers in the post compulsory education and training sector and the training is effective in preparing teachers to teach

in the sector. The various elements of the training are coherent and combine well to secure trainees' progress. Module handbooks are helpful and provide trainees with clear information about the content and assessment requirements of each module. Teaching materials are good and are accessible to all tutors and trainees online. The clear focus on diversity and inclusion, which is encouraged through module design and delivery, raises trainees' awareness of equality and diversity.

12. Careful matching of pre-service trainees to placements and the early start of their placement enable pre-service trainees to gain confidence in a teaching environment quickly and to begin to relate theory to practice early in their experience. In turn this brings a creative energy to training sessions. The one-week secondary school placement provides pre-service trainees with valuable knowledge and awareness of transition issues from school to FE and experience of an alternative context for 14 to 19 provision.

13. The quality of teaching in the partnership is good and teacher trainers consistently model good practice in their training sessions. The quality of support for trainees from all sources, both formal and informal is good and trainees find their tutors approachable and responsive. All teacher trainers are experienced and very committed to supporting their trainees. University based trainers and the subject mentors of pre-service trainees have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the latter comment positively on the good guidance and training they receive from the university. The majority of mentors who support in-service trainees have a good understanding of their responsibilities, however, the voluntary nature of this role and therefore the extent to which it is carried out consistently and systematically is less effective than is the case for pre-service trainees.

14. Training meets the needs of individual trainees well. Great care is taken to ensure that pre-service trainees are placed in appropriate institutions and are given the opportunity to experience the full age range, group sizes and levels of their subject areas. However, opportunities for in-service trainees to gain experience of a broad range of learning contexts and provision are less consistent. For example while those working in adult and community learning situations sometimes have limited opportunities, trainees who teach nursing are involved in substantial team teaching and peer observation.

15. There are clear opportunities and strong support for all trainees to develop literacy, language and numeracy skills. However, the opportunities provided for trainees to develop expertise in teaching their specialist subject varies. For pre-service trainees, the good support they receive from subject mentors in their placements and from subject tutors at the university ensure that they have good opportunities. However, opportunities for in-service trainees to be supported in their subject development are inconsistent and subject networks are underdeveloped.

16. There is strong focus on developing reflection and self evaluation as a means of improving teaching and learning. Trainees find feedback on lesson observations very useful and this helps them move forward and improve their practice. For in-service trainees who have been teaching for some time, this has been a very helpful aspect of their training - forcing them to rethink the range of teaching and learning strategies they use. Equally the training sessions have allowed them to reflect on their practice and to recognise the value of theory and how this can positively inform their teaching. Target setting and action planning resulting from lesson observations and tutorials are very effective in improving trainees' competence as teachers. However, the effectiveness of individual learning plans is still developing and their value to the learning process, although recognised by trainees towards the end of their training, is not yet explicit or fully embedded in the training.

17. Assignments provide very good opportunities for trainees to integrate theory with practice, to contextualise learning and to provide a broader view of the post compulsory education and training sector. In addition, they encourage valuable active research by trainees. In-service trainees, in particular, value the research focus of these assignments and the opportunities they provide to pursue areas of particular interest, to utilise their findings in the workplace and to share findings with colleagues.

18. Trainees find the support and guidance given to their academic writing useful and, in particular, they value the opportunity to get early feedback on draft assignments. Assessment of assignments is rigorous and accurate. Where assignments do not meet the required standards, trainees are referred and have the opportunity to resubmit. Effective feedback on how to improve ensures that resubmitted assignments demonstrate significant improvement. Final assessment of trainees' teaching against the standards is accurate and judgements at the pass/fail borderline are secure.

Management and quality assurance of provision

19. The university and its partner colleges have effective equal opportunities policies and procedures. The recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups substantially exceeds the university's aim of at least matching the proportions in the local community. The design of the prospectus and other initial literature provides an inclusive image that is encouraging to potential trainees from different minority ethnic, gender and age groups and information is accessible. Trainees with disabilities are well supported and successful.

20. Recruitment and selection processes for the pre-service course are robust and comprehensive interview and selection notes are kept by the university. However, processes for the in-service course across the partnership are variable. In some colleges, there are strong links between

initial teacher training and other aspects of management in the college and robust recruitment and selection procedures are in place but this is not the case in all. CRB procedures are robust.

21. Accommodation and resources at the university and in most partner colleges are good. Most teaching material is available online and is shared with partner colleges. While university-based trainees use the university's intranet site routinely, use by trainees in colleges is less frequent.

22. Overall leadership of the programme is good and management of the training programme ensures that high quality training and good outcomes are promoted. The operational manual for the partnership is a helpful document that includes clear statements of roles and responsibilities, recruitment and selection, assessment and quality assurance procedures. However, while the roles and responsibilities of mentors are clearly stated, a small minority of mentors supporting in-service trainees are less confident and clear about what is required of them.

23. Partner colleges acknowledge the high level of support provided by the university. Good relationships between partner colleges and the university result in effective collaboration and joint project activity. For example, they have been involved in a government-funded project to improve subject mentoring as well as staff development activities at which all partner colleges are represented. Where problems with communication or partnership working are identified, the university takes rapid and highly effective action to remedy the situation to the satisfaction of partner colleges and trainees.

24. Colleges and trainees are well represented at the regular programme committee meetings, which take place on a rotating basis in each partner college in order to ensure as full involvement as possible. These meetings provide an effective forum for decision making and information sharing between partners and a valuable opportunity for mentor training. Induction sessions for new mentors and additional mentor training sessions are held at each of the partner colleges to encourage attendance. The effectiveness of, and attendance at, mentor training across the partnership is recognised by the university as an area for continuing development and is kept under regular review.

25. The university provides good support for all teacher trainers who deliver the modules, whether in colleges or in the university. As well as peer observation that involves college partners, there is wide sharing of materials and cross teaching. University tutors provide guest lectures on college provision, for example on sessions on FE funding, and college tutors provide guest lectures on university provision, for example on accelerated learning and basic skills.

26. Well established and clear procedures are in place to quality assure the main aspects of the provision. This involves a rigorous university wide

annual monitoring and reporting cycle, which includes partner college submissions. Monitoring of the quality of mentoring and specialist subject support for pre-service trainees is good but that for in-service trainees is less effective. Robust procedures for the internal and external moderation of assessment of trainees' written assignments and of their teaching ensure that assessment is accurate and consistent across the partnership.

27. The partnership has a very clear sense of its own strengths and weaknesses and is committed to the continual improvement of its provision for trainees. It has good capacity to improve further. The quality and effectiveness of improvement planning is good and demonstrates prompt and highly effective responses to issues raised by its external examiner and other internal and external sources of monitoring and evaluation. This is evident in, for example, its actions to remove identified overlap between module content, to overcome the lack of representation of in-service trainees on programme committees, the additional support provided to one of its partner colleges following staff changes and, in general, the rapid and effective actions taken to improve aspects of the provision following phase one of this inspection.

Appendix

The following providers were members of the University of Derbyshire's partnership at the time of the inspections:

Derby College

Loughborough College

South East Derbyshire College

Stephenson College