

**Secondary Initial Teacher Training
Partnership based on**

York St John College

**Lord Mayor's Walk
York
YO31 7EX**

**A short inspection report
2005/06**

**Managing Inspector:
Judith Rundle HMI**

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Introduction

The York St John College works in partnership with 20 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training for the 11-16 age range. It offers a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) course in religious education. At the time of the inspection there were 15 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 provider will receive a full inspection in three years.

Key strengths

- the strong involvement of the partnership in selection, central training, management and development of the course
- the good relationships between the college and partnership schools
- the good quality support provided for trainees and school-based staff
- the good programmes of enrichment activities to support trainees' understanding of religious traditions and to promote links with local religious communities
- the good day-to-day management of the course supported by a range of well organised and easy to use documentation
- effective use of a placement in an urban school to enable trainees to develop their understanding of issues related to pupils who use English as an additional language, inclusion and cultural diversity.

Points for action

- ensuring that all training is of at least good quality
- developing the subject knowledge audit so that it reflects current developments in the subject.

Points for consideration

- make better use of the full range of evaluation data on the course so that improvement planning is more rigorous
- ensure all trainees are aware of the age range designation of the course

The quality of training

1. The quality of the religious education course has been maintained since the last inspection and a number of important improvements have occurred. However, some aspects of the training programme require improvement to ensure it continues to reflect best practice in the subject.

2. The content and structure are designed to ensure that trainees make good progress towards the Standards. The training in lesson planning, assessment and the use of information and communications technology has a high profile in the structure of the programme. Provision of opportunities for trainees to work at post-16 remains strong and the range of enrichment activities to support their understanding of religious diversity have been extended further. The urban placement programme is very well organised and ensures that trainees have good experience of working with pupils for whom English is an additional language, and of issues related to inclusion and cultural diversity. Links between the subject and general professional studies programmes are clear and effective although subject training is not always referenced closely enough to the Standards. Insufficient attention is paid to consolidating the trainees' understanding of the range of subject pedagogies within the training programme. The world religions workshops provide good opportunities for trainees to develop their understanding of the major religious traditions. The course does not pay explicit enough attention to the National Secondary Strategy in the early stages of the course.

3. A strength of the provision is the high level of care and support trainees receive from the course tutor team. The good quality mentor development programme is helping to ensure that trainees receive good support and training in school; however, the quality of mentoring by professional tutors varies from satisfactory to good.

4. The subject knowledge audit remains a weakness. It is very narrowly conceived and does not adequately reflect current developments in the subject. Insufficient attention is paid to providing trainees with specific targets and action plans in relation to the development of their subject knowledge. However, in the majority of Standards, trainees have a good grasp of the progress they are making and their major targets for improvement.

5. Great care is paid to ensuring the individual needs of trainees are met. Trainees are carefully matched to subject departments in schools which can address their individual needs. There has been an overall improvement in the quality of individual action planning and target setting assisted by the introduction of a pre-course audit of skills against the Standards, and consequently trainees have a good grasp of the progress they are making. The process whereby mentors and trainees work together to complete an individualised action plan at the start of each placement is valuable, although the quality of these plans is inconsistent.

6. There have been good improvements in the mechanisms for recording weekly mentor meetings and targets, and in the guidelines to support school-based training. The arrangements for the assessment of trainees remain good and have been further strengthened by the appointment of a subject-specialist external examiner.

Management and quality assurance

7. The quality of management and quality assurance have been maintained since the last inspection. However, quality assurance procedures are not used rigorously enough to ensure consistently high quality training across the partnership.

8. Selection procedures are good, and include candidate visits to partnership schools and the completion of a prior achievement evaluation against the Standards in preparation for interview. The recruitment of minority ethnic trainees to the course remains low; however the college has initiated a number of specific projects to address this position but it is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives. The college has agreed policies for equal opportunities and race relations, which are fully implemented during the recruitment and selection process. The implementation of college equal opportunities and race relations policies in schools is creatively monitored through a related school-based task.

9. Clear information on the course is available to all candidates including on the college web site, and trainees are prepared well for school experiences. Despite this, some trainees are still unsure of the age-range designation of the course.

10. Interviews are rigorous and partnership schools always have representation. Standardised questions have been improved in recent years to include a more focused approach to judging candidates' suitability and commitment to training, following an analysis of reasons for withdrawals in the past. The majority of successful candidates are given pre-course tasks to complete although these are frequently not individualised.

11. The partnership agreement is a succinct and clear document with a good summary of roles and responsibilities for professional tutors and mentors. The document makes it clear what funding is available for each placement. The partnership arrangements and expectations for training are clearly set out and understood by college and school-based staff. The secondary steering group, consisting of college and school staff, has increasingly taken a successful role in the strategic development of the course as well as in operational activities. For example, the handbooks for professional tutors and mentors have been revised; and the group undertake thoughtful deliberations and careful organisation of the second school placement to best meet the needs of individual trainees.

12. Communication between the college and schools is a strength of the provision and relationships with subject mentors are very positive. Schools

particularly value the personal and frequent contact from college tutors and are confident of a rapid response to any queries. The newsletters are informative and provide good opportunities for all partners to contribute and share good practice in training.

13. Management structures for the college are clearly laid out and the head of initial teacher education has also undertaken the secondary programme leadership role to add stability to the secondary team. The steering group makes valuable contributions to the annual evaluation report and subject action plan. Although the process for holding subject and professional studies course leaders to account is in place, it is not implemented consistently enough. The college is aware of the potential isolation of the secondary course leaders and consequently offers good opportunities for the subject leader to become involved in local and national initiatives for religious education.

14. Roles and responsibilities of the school-based tutors and mentors are fully and clearly set out in the handbooks and understood well. All school-based staff comment favourably on the ease of accessing information in the handbooks and the majority use this information very effectively. Training for tutors and mentors has improved significantly in recent years and now includes tightly focused activities related to the improvement and consistency of school-based training. College tutors visit all schools and trainees at least four times during placements to monitor training programmes, consistency of training and the accuracy of assessing trainees' progress towards the Standards. Feedback to school-based trainers during school visits is helpful and thorough. The college is aware of variability in school-based training, particularly for general professional studies, and is already working to resolve this. The sharing of identified good and outstanding practice in a range of training activities is not fully exploited.

15. Quality assurance procedures include an annual evaluation report and action plan. However, this does not use the full range of self-evaluation processes. All partners have a clear vision for course development and the secondary programme action plan is a thorough document. However it does not make sufficient use of the course and trainee evaluation data, or the full text of the external examiner's report to support further development of the course. Progress on the action plans are reported at steering group meetings.

16. Trainees are given appropriate opportunities to evaluate central training and the majority do this conscientiously. The college respond positively to these evaluations, for example by reducing the urban placement to one week. School-based staff have a good range of opportunities to offer feedback to the college such as the steering group, mentor meetings and at the end of placements. However, outcomes of these evaluations are not always used effectively to support self evaluation and production of the annual evaluation report.